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THE  
FATE OF A FOOL.

BY  
EMMA GHENT CURTIS.

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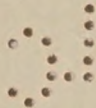
BY

EMMA G. CURTIS.

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June 29, 1931





## DEDICATION.

In the hour of discouragement and doubt I am cheered and sustained by my husband, who, refusing to believe in the depravity of mankind, resolutely points to the better time which careful education and progressive thought are to bring about. Therefore,

TO JAMES CURTIS

this little volume

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.







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## PREFACE.

The author of this work lays no claim to literary ability. She simply cries out in alarm and shame at the boldness of an evil which mankind should have long since lived down. If the reader believes that she has exaggerated, let him investigate.

E. G. C.







# THE FATE OF A FOOL.

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## CHAPTER I.

BERUALILLO.

THOSE who have not seen the mountains of Colorado can scarcely imagine them. They are so vast, their succession of plateau, foot-hill and range is so extensive, their peaks are so lofty, and their slopes so long, that they surpass all description, all imagination. Humanity feels insignificant among their very foot-hills.

They traverse the State in long lines, they cross, they intersect, they divide and fall away in different directions, utterly regardless of the laws of fracture. They shut in large parks where flow pellucid streams, that draw their legacies of torrent from fields of perpetual snow; and where glisten the waters of deep, still lakes, whose bosoms mirror the plumage of myriads of water-fowl.

The mountains bear upon their slopes extensive forests of hemlock, pine and spruce, where bound the light-footed deer, and where the grizzly and the mountain lion prowl for prey; and lofty and inaccessible as they are, benumbed by endless frost, they bear upon their heads the bread of Colorado. For when the summer sunbeams embrace the edges of their vast snowfields, little streams of water trickle down over mosses and bowlders to swell mighty rivers, thence course out into the ditches of distant valleys, and water fertile fields, pastures and orchards. The Valleys of Colorado are as completely dependent upon her rivers for their fertility as was Egypt upon the Nile. Were it not for these, her fields would lie untilled and her rich mines be unknown; and should the minds of humanity revert once more to idolatry, the citizens of Colorado would be found kneeling to river-gods and building temples in their honor. But the mountain is still further back in the connection; she is the mother of the river; her snows give it birth, and from the same source it draws its abundance of life.

Somewhat south of the centre of the State rises in



awful grandeur Mount Berualillo. Her sides are gashed with deep gulches and chasms, filled with perpetual snow, which in the distance appear fine white lines drawn against the heavy blue of the mighty mass. Cold and icy and beautiful as some heartless society belle, she stands forever in her coronet of perpetual snow, as if looking down in contempt upon the less lofty peaks about her. Her dress is of mighty pines, gnarled cedars and white-trunked quaking aspens, decorated with many a flounce of rocky ledge, and studded with many a gem of granite, sparkling mica and glittering quartz. About her feet murmur clear, cold streams, flowing forever down the long heavy slopes of plateau upon which she rests, in search of the Gaston, which rolls away in the valley thousands of feet below. And one of the clearest and most beautiful of these streams is Boulder Creek, whose picturesque cañon and succession of level little parks are the delight of tourists and sight-seers.

Nature had certainly tired of lofty peaks, rugged hills and deep, dark gorges, when she fashioned the Valley of the Gaston; it is a grassy park some thirty to thirty-five miles wide, within an enclosing circle of foot-hills, nestling like a little corner of paradise in the midst of nature's awful chaos. The Gaston leaves its gloomy cañon, where two thousand feet of rock stand well nigh perpendicular, and rolls into the valley where its banks become low and grassy. A little to the west of the centre of this park lies Milroy City, with its tall-chimneyed smelters, its neat dwellings, and handsome hotels. About five miles below, Boulder Creek rolls across the park to join the Gaston. The surrounding circle of hills shut out the fiercer winter winds, and gentle breezes from the cañon temper the heat of summer. The climate is a perpetual delight, and sick and discouraged tourists flock here from all quarters, for health and recreation.

And men dwell amid this glorious beauty, view the rolling river, the rocky, wooded hills and the lofty coronet of distant Berualillo, and love, talk, quarrel, and follow the avocations of life. Perhaps they are no better—perhaps no worse—than their brothers of the plain.



## CHAPTER II.

### DEFINITION OF THE TERM FOOL.

A FOOL is a person who believes that humanity has great room for improvement. Sensible people do not agree with him. They consider humanity all well enough so far as morality, temperance, generosity, and knowledge are concerned; they would be willing to have more wealth, comforts, and privileges for themselves and a few of their immediate friends; but they incessantly wonder what the world wants with more blessings than it has. These same sensible people believe that unhappy, unfortunate, miserable, and fallen creatures are entirely to blame for their sorrows, and that aside from being cursed for their existence, when they—the sensible people—feel like cursing, or used in time of convenience, that they should be politely ignored. Why should sensible people bother their heads about the miseries or the wrongs of others? They should busy themselves enjoying life, accumulating property, and looking after their own affairs generally, and not waste their time mourning over or trying to alleviate the sorrows of their neighbors.

Not so with a fool. He always has his pet schemes for improving people. He not only wants to improve himself, but he wants other people to improve. He believes that the four tyrants known as education, public opinion, strength, and circumstance, are responsible for much, if not all, the sorrow and wrong that exist; and that consequently, since every one has an education of some sort, the prevailing method of education should be changed somewhat, public opinion should be made more harsh toward offenders and more lenient toward victims, strength should be more evenly apportioned, and power should be taken out of the hands of circumstance.

Of course he is plentifully informed of the fact that he is a fool. His best friends try to hold him back, and prevent his running into the teeth of public opinion where he is certain to be devoured; his enemies gloat with satisfaction over his ruinous course, while the indifferent amuse themselves with laughing at his folly. But his zeal is equal to his foolishness, and he keeps bravely and resolutely on; were his zeal to give way he would eventually become sensible; and just in proportion to its capacity for endur-



ance is his extent of folly. The only consolation connected with this sad lot of the fool is the fact that after-generations of mankind frequently pay a good deal of respect to his memory, and sometimes even imitate his folly to some extent.

Sensible people in all ages of the world have had to be annoyed by a greater or less number of fools, who wanted many and various things—more religious liberty, more political liberty, more scientific liberty, and more liberty to hunt bread and butter for their wives and children. Even sensible people are not always patient, and they have occasionally been so pestered by these disturbers of their serenity that they have ridded themselves of them by burning them at the stake, throwing them down precipices, or tearing them in pieces. At present they torture them with the fires of public disapproval or maim them with the shafts of ridicule; and they are sufficiently persistent in this treatment to keep the fool on the look-out for his welfare.

If a few fools be mentioned in this chapter, merely as illustrations, it is feared that the reader will elevate his hands in surprise and exclaim: "Why these are heroes and martyrs!" But let him consider; they did, or attempted to do, what many if not all their sensible and conservative neighbors told them was foolish, impracticable, and even sinful. They talked of things which their neighbors begged them to let lie hidden under the dross of custom and law; they were assured by their neighbors that it was flying in the face of Providence to meddle with the established order of things; but they in turn insisted that the established order of things was generally wrong, and ought to be dis-established. Their neighbors went on to assure them that if they meddled with the things they proposed to disturb, they would bring the King of What-you-may-call, or the Prince of Somethingorother, or the Duke of Blankreason, or Lord Bigotry, or Count Enjoy-himself, or the Honorable Mr. Crushpeople, into disrepute; and how horrible that would be! The sensible people are very careful about stirring up trouble with the strong.

One of the most conspicuous fools of modern or mediæval times was one Galileo, who advocated the theory that people would be better off if they spent less time killing each other off in wars, and more in studying the natural peculiarities of the world in which they live. He soon learned that fools must suffer the consequences of their



folly, for he got his feet burned almost off his legs for his trouble.

George Washington was a fool ; he believed that people should not be taxed without their consent ; he was deserted by many of his neighbors, accused of stealing, hung and burned in effigy, and branded as a traitor in a large portion of the civilized world. Enough of his friends remained with him to give him some encouragement, but the world pronounced these quite as foolish as their leader.

Robert Fulton was another one ; he believed that steam could be made to propel a boat ; and his folly furnished sensible people with amusement for years.

Abraham Lincoln was an exceedingly prominent specimen of foolishness ; he believed that a man should not have the power to sell another man's wife and children to buy parlor furniture for himself ; and he lost his life because he chose to act upon this theory.

Stonewall Jackson was also a fool ; he believed that he ought to help point out the road to Heaven to the ignorant and dependent colored people around him, and in pursuance of this theory he taught a class of colored children at Sunday school. But this was not the worst of him. He actually advocated the idea that his wife had certain rights which he was bound to respect ! Now in the course of years, there has arisen quite a party who believe that Stonewall's head was all right in regard to the former theory, but as to the latter point his idiocy was so glaring that only the most pronounced cranks will profess any sympathy whatever with him.

These are only a few of the legion of fools who have from time to time disturbed the tranquillity of this sensible, wise, and conservative world, but they will be sufficient for examples. There are some fools living now, but they have trials enough without the author of this work flinging in their faces their names printed in a catalogue of fools. There are a small number of women, who, like Washington, do not like to be taxed without their consent ; there are a few persons who do not believe that John Smith should live in luxury off of the profits of Tom Brown's appetite for strong drink ; there are a few others who believe that the poor ought to have a few more rights that might be used in cases of emergency. But the sensible people will publish newspaper jokes concerning the



age, false teeth, and appearance of the first class, and avenge themselves upon the others in many and various ways.

The author hopes that what has been said concerning the fool of one generation becoming the hero of subsequent times, will not lead any youthful reader into ways of foolishness. If he have a fondness for such ways let him enter them because of his own private judgment; for the fate of a fool is generally a very sad one, and the author does not wish to be responsible for any one enduring its horrors.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### A CONVERSATION BETWEEN CERTAIN RESIDENTS OF BOWLDER CREEK PARK.

THE neighbors all pronounced John Solomon to be a most excellent young man. He was so industrious and frugal that he had succeeded by the time he was twenty-six years old in getting together property sufficient to be called a comfortable start in life. He was gentle and respectful to his widowed mother, and was quite ready to do kindnesses to those who deserved them. His mother had been bereft of her husband about four years before. There was no anxiety as to her living, as John Solomon the elder had left her a goodly amount of property; she had been industrious in her time, and was still a most excellent financial manager, and had taken much pains to encourage young John in ways of thrift.

She had encouraged him to rent a ranch for a few years, and make what he could out of the venture; he had done so, and his management had been so successful that he had bought the ranch, paying half down and the remainder in yearly payments. His mother could easily have paid for the ranch, but she very wisely decided to allow her son to learn to lean on his own financial strength.

John had never learned to use tobacco in any form; he did not drink intoxicating liquors or use profane language; he was fond of honest amusement, was the life of a ball,



an evening party or a croquet contest ; but since croquet is generally played in the daytime, he did not attend upon it so regularly as upon other amusements, lest his business interests should suffer from neglect.

The mother had never gone to any trouble to instil into her son's mind those fine moral sentiments which some progressive people advocate ; but what did that matter so long as John was such a good young man ? The mother was devoted to business success, house plants, scandal, and embroidery—all eminently respectable pursuits. She owned a pleasant cottage in Milroy City, where she dwelt along with a fat terrier dog and a trim hired girl. She carefully watched over John's affairs and busied herself with his money making and his love affairs. In regard to the latter she was much interested. She had selected for her son's wife, Sophia Edgeworth, whose father had had three daughters married off, and had given to each one of them ten head of good American cows ! Of course he would do as well by Sophia, if not better.

But John seemed in no hurry to marry Sophia or any one else ; he never crossed his mother when she spoke to him upon her favorite theme, but he had no idea of gratifying her in regard to it. He had a vague, sweet dream of a certain angel who was one day to appear upon his horizon, and he resolved to wait for her. His wife, the angel for whom he was waiting—ah, how his heart thrilled as his mind pictured her—must be tall and willowy, because he was tall and athletic ; she must have soft golden hair to contrast with his own dark brown locks ; she must be daintily beautiful, because he was handsome ; she must possess all the feminine excellencies, must be pure as a lily, must sing like a nightingale, and play like a professional. Such a plain girl as Sophia would never do.

There is another of John's characteristics worthy of mention—his will-power ; he had a high and ruling spirit and indomitable courage of the physical sort ; as these traits were backed up by great muscular prowess, he found himself and his opinions treated with universal respect. His finding it natural and easy to float with the current of public opinion, and having no particularly strong or new ideas as a consequence, greatly added to the respect in which he was held.

At the time of the opening of this story the September sun was warming the east bank of Boulder Creek, and its



fierce heat accounted for a group of conversationalists sitting in the shadow of the west bank. They were John Solomon, whose face was particularly radiant because the last payment had been made on his ranch the day before; Mr. De Kalb, the school teacher from Deer Trail Park; Ike Ransom, the wealthiest cattle-man on the creek; and Frank Hatton, who was only a cow-boy and a brute. De Kalb was a tall, handsome, but rather sickly looking young man, with an expression of peculiar nobility upon his face. His dark hair was brushed smoothly back from a forehead whose breadth and depth showed unusual intelligence. Ike Ransom was a man of ordinary size, with rather a handsome presence, and a very soft, persuasive and agreeable voice. Frank Hatton was a huge, burly creature, whose only agreeable features were a pair of kindly, almost womanish, blue eyes.

The quartet were engaged in one of those Sunday afternoon discussions so common in country neighborhoods. There was good reason why they should talk—there was a new subject to talk about. There had been a strange lady at church that day—a lady whose beauty was quite as strange and unusual as was her presence at their church. Who was she? She was the new music teacher. A music club had been formed in the neighborhood and this lady was to be the person whose ears were to suffer from discords and such inventions of mistimed noise as the Boulder Creek children might be capable of.

She had been thoroughly discussed; her beauty, her rare musical powers, her stately carriage, and the probability of her being engaged, were all considered and reconsidered. Every word had been respectful, for her noble presence inspired only respect. John Solomon felt a strange desire to talk, though when he spoke of the new music teacher his voice was a little unsteady; but he liked to tease Frank and see him get excited, as he always did when there was no reason for it.

"Well Frank," he said, "I suppose you'll try to take her to the dance, won't you?"

"I s'pose I won't;" answered Frank with a snarl.

"Why not?" continued John; "we've all got an equal chance."

"Well, John Solomon," said Frank, "you've no right, as I can see, to try to bring out my mind, but you're welcome to it for all that. There isn't one of you that ad-



mires that girl more than I do—so far as honest admiration goes—she's just like a patch of warm sunshine. But I know that I ain't fit to go near her, and I ain't quite so low down yet as to want what I ain't fit for. When I look for a woman to go to a dance with me, or to go through life with me, I'll take some one just as low down as I am, provided I can find such, and then we'll have nothin' to fight about."

"You don't mean, Frank, that you'd marry a regular bad woman; one out of a dance-house?" said John, secretly pleased that things were working so well.

"Yes, I do mean to do just that if ever I marry; no other kind would be fit for me, and I believe in a man marrying who he's fit for."

"But no one will visit with your wife or notice her a bit more than they will a dog," suggested Ike Ransom.

"What if they don't? I'll treat her decently myself, or cut my own throat. I've got clear to the bottom of the moral hill myself, and I'm not going to try to get up by holding on to any decent woman's skirts and letting her pull me up. I intend to take the hand of some woman that's down, and we'll go up hill together."

"Oh Gosh, Frank!" said John; "there isn't a redeeming trait about those women; they'd never do for a wife; they cuss, and drink, and gamble, and swear, and carouse—"

"Don't I cuss and drink and gamble and swear and carouse?" shrieked Frank as he leaped up from the bank, threw down his hat, and began to warm up to his subject; "Haven't I gone down to the very bottom of Hell to hunt for every kind of cussedness? Haven't I got everything on my stinkin' conscience but murder and stealin', and every stain on my rotten tongue but lies? John Solomon, there ain't a woman in a dance-house in this State that's as low down as I am. Them women was all pure once, till some dog with store clothes on ruined 'em, and then every body else kicked 'em and turned 'em out, till they had to go to the dance-house or starve. Them women, low as they are, are there to get bread to eat, and I don't go there for nothing but the darnedest, meanest cussedness that ever Hell let loose. My mother was a good woman, but she died when I was a kid, or else I might a been decent. But it's too late now, and I'm not going to ask



any pure woman to blush all her life on account of my filth."

"Oh!" said Ike Ransom. "This question about women now—women are each other's own worst enemies. Now men never look down on bad women half like women do. Now take a lot of women in a neighborhood, and if a girl falls, not one of them has a particle of mercy for her."

"Well," said DeKalb with a grave smile, "the man by whom she falls, and who deserts her, is certainly not overstocked with mercy. The women would hardly do worse than that."

"Speakin' of that," said Frank, "makes me think of father's niggers that he had before the war, back in the States. If one of them niggers stole anything, or tried to run off, or done anything underhanded, every other nigger on the place 'ud run a race to try and be the first one to tell father. And you can take any set of critters that's kept under, and the worse they're kept under and abused and scared, the more apt they are to up and help their tyrants agin' each other. They think it's the only way to save their own hides and git favor for themselves. Now that the niggers are free they hold together better; and I believe that if women was given a few more rights, they'd hold up for one another more."

"Oh," said Ike, "women are narrow-minded; they are selfish and unforgiving where women are concerned."

"And if you're so wonderfully forgiving, Ike, why didn't you marry Sally Lentz that you used to run with pretty freely? A man so good and forgiving could certainly forgive a stain on a woman's name, especially when he'd created the stain."

Frank, as usual, was talking much too freely; Ike was getting angry and red; but then after all it was only Frank Hatton who was "shooting off his mouth;" and a good deal of allowance must be made for a brute, especially if his limbs are heavy and his joints especially sound. So he only said rather gruffly:

"Oh come, Frank! Don't be unreasonable! Men have rights, and sensible women don't pretend to question them. A man's health would suffer if he always restrained himself. Now my wife is too sensible to make a fuss about Sallie Lentz or any other woman that I've been intimate with. Why, a really sensible woman thinks more of a man if he's been intimate with other women."



De Kalb reddened. "Mr. Ransom," he said, "I cannot agree with you. I cannot believe that either a man or a woman prefers a stained creature to a pure one. Women indeed submit to shameful things, but it is because they have to do so. And as to health, I have watched that matter a good deal, and while I have known several young men die of excess and disease, I have known none suffer ill health from restraint. Now for myself, I inherit consumption; my lungs are weak because my mother's were; but aside from that, I have not a single complaint, and I mean, by careful exercise and judicious living, to restore my lungs. And I am now, and will remain, until I am married, Mr. Ransom, just as free of any such indulgence, as your wife could possibly have been when you married her."

"Ike Ransom, I thought you had too much sense to talk like that," broke in Frank; "vice and whiskey are just what are making people trifling; don't I know that when I was eighteen years old, I could have flung all three of you at once, and I never had had a day's sickness or hardly an hour's pain; but about that time, you and Bill Howels and some more of you, got me started to drinkin' whiskey and runnin' to the dance-house, and now here I am at twenty-nine with enough aches and pains to make Hell look old-fashioned when I get there. I've been barely saved from small-pox once, and just got out of typhoid fever alive twice: and I do think Goddlemighty never did a poorer job than when he saved me them three times. I'd blow my cussed brains out if it wasn't such an infernal waste of powder."

"Oh, but Frank, you're always so unreasonable; now, if you had only been moderate, and not took to lying around that old dance-house drunk for two weeks at a time——"

"Oh, yes, Ike Ransom, you go on singing your old song about moderation! Isn't a man that steals one horse just as much of a horse-thief as one that steals forty horses? I tell you, Ike Ransom, there is one thing no man can accuse me of; I never tried to mix respectability up with my cussedness. There's no danger of any decent person gittin' fooled on me. I wish to my soul that I was white and pure again, but it's everlasting too late; and I'll not try to make up by shoutin' decency and moderation and joinin' the church and yellin' for Goddlemighty, after runnin' errands for the Devil all my life. If I do shake



the Devil, I'll try and shake off some of my devilish ways too."

The brute evidently had possession of the floor. Ike Ransom arose, muttered some reply between his teeth, and strode away. John Solomon, whose home lay in the direction of Ransom's, accompanied him, after courteously bidding the others good-night. De Kalb arose and walked over to Frank. He took his arm and said:

"Hatton, you are right. Let's walk down the road a ways." And the two passed along in earnest talk, which was too lowly spoken to be heard by others than themselves. The sun sank, the atmosphere took on its evening chill, and the splendid moon rose, whitening all the distant peaks. The pellucid waters of Boulder Creek rolled along over the rocks, and rippled over the gleaming sands, as cheerfully as if no angry words had echoed above them.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE FOOL.

"I saw her just above the horizon, cheering and decorating the elevated sphere she had just begun to move in; glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendor, and joy."

It had been the desire of the author to introduce each chapter in this little narrative with a selection from some one of the world's great thinkers—novels being very frequently adorned in this fashion—but when the matter came under careful consideration, it was remembered that the books in which the chapters were so introduced, treated principally of persons who were more or less sensible. Of course it would not be kind to arrange a work treating of a fool and foolishness in the same manner as one treating of wise people and wisdom.

But there is one book quite well known to the world, whose contents treat of the peculiarities of a gentleman named Don Quixote, whose chapters are introduced by plain, original prose; now since the principal character in this narrative was quite as quixotic as Quixote himself, these chapters will follow the example of those, and come



before the public plain and unadorned. However, in this one instance, an exception is made, because the words of the great English orator so well describe the heroine, and because, as the neighbors all averred, she was sensible enough about some things. The "elevated sphere" was the position of music teacher on Boulder Creek; the physical altitude is some six thousand feet, and the citizens of the neighborhood believe that the social, mental, and moral elevation is also worthy of note, as it no doubt is.

It has often been said that a super-abundance of either education or beauty is quite liable to make a fool of a person. Our heroine possessed a very goodly allowance of the former and an exceedingly large share of the latter; so it would naturally follow that her foolishness would be something extraordinary. Gessia Antwerp stood five and one half feet tall; her form was perfect as a statue, and this perfection was carried down to her slender, shapely feet, and along her plump shoulders, down to her exquisitely moulded arms, tapering forearms, supple wrists, and beautiful hands, whose fingers seemed always curved. Her classic face, with its dark, half laughing, half appealing eyes, was set in a rare halo of fluffy golden hair. The face was an unusual type—the brown eyes and dark heavy brows seemed to convey the idea that art had been called in to assist nature to produce a contrast to the golden braids; but it was not so; it was simply an unusual face bearing the impress of an unusual character.

A club of eight of the wealthy cattle-owners and ranchmen of Boulder Creek had decided that their children should be taught music, and Gessia had been employed as instructress. Her first appearance at church in the neighborhood was the cause of quite a flutter among masculine hearts, and considerable wagging among tongues both masculine and feminine. Those who were poorest in words, seldom said, "She is pretty." They hunted stronger terms. Perhaps no one in the neighborhood was more affected than John Solomon. He found himself neglecting his work very frequently during the ensuing week, and wondering if his fond dream of the angel might come true.

But Gessia thought far less of her beauty than did those who looked upon her; indeed, when she confronted her glorious image in the mirror, she often turned away with fear; she was not indifferent to her charms, but she



greatly feared they might do harm—and her greatest fear, both for herself and those dear to her, was that in some way they might do harm. She remembered several men who had fallen in love with her when she had intended nothing of the sort; she had been kind to them—she couldn't help being kind to people—but that was all. She saw that her beauty, together with her kindliness and vivacity, was leading men to fall in love with her, and this she dreaded. She did not want people to be miserable on her account. She often wished she might find her fate; that she might be happily married, so that men would no longer think of her as to be loved. No, it was not concerning her beauty that she was so foolish. The story of her folly will now be told. She looked forward to a happy marriage as the best possible destiny for her; she believed that a home, a husband, and little ones, were things that the best women should hope for and cherish. Friends had often suggested that with her gifts of face and voice, success upon the stage was certain; but she remembered that when she had played in the home troupe, back in Canton, the other girls had been jealous of the furor she created. No, she would not go upon the stage and cheat people to whom nature had been less kind; she was sure it would be better to wed the man she loved and raise a family of fine boys and girls—boys especially—how she loved dear, manly little fellows, with bright eyes and rosy faces; and how much the world needed good men! And her boys would be such good boys; she would do her duty as a mother—so many mothers failed to do their duty, and Gessia feared that was why there were so many bad people in the world. She was not very well informed about bad people, but she feared there were a great many in the world—not one woman in a thousand of course, and not one man in a hundred;—but even these were too many. It was wrong that the law should allow immoral things, or that society should encourage them. She was sorry that some women joked as she had heard them do about things that were impure; she was bitterly sorry that there had been a house in Canton where bad women lived, and where some of the young men of the little city used to visit. The reader must not believe our heroine cold; not at all; she expected to love that noble husband who would one day claim her very devotedly; but both their loves would be so pure, so grand, so noble,



that even when passionate there would be nothing to blush for. You are thinking that Gessia was preparing to be disappointed? Very likely. But the unsophisticated creature felt that she had a perfect right to believe so, and to hope and wish for a pure husband; she knew that men, when they married, always, or nearly always, selected pure companions; and she was foolish enough to reason from the masculine standpoint. If men wished their children to have pure and unsullied mothers, why should she not wish for her children a pure and unsullied father? She believed that the principal difference in the social habits of the sexes is not natural but created; she believed that if the ordinary boy were as carefully reared as the ordinary girl, that his nature would be very similar to hers; she believed that if the ordinary female child were allowed to talk of all kinds of filth, were encouraged in foul jests, and considered a milksop if she failed to indulge herself to the utmost, that she would entirely fail of moral grandeur. She did not believe in the system of morals which calls Fannie in to the protection of the home, and allows Tommie to play with any kind of children, and on any sort of back alley, until ten at night; she reasoned that since all the protection and good counsel that are so generously lavished upon females fail to keep all of them pure, and since all the evil teachings that are showered upon males fail to make all of them bad, that the sexes are quite similar morally, save for the differences which custom and breeding have created. She did not believe that one sex should be the victim of the other; nature had created the males stronger, and for that reason they demand what is agreeable to them; she reasoned that a woman also might have a little prejudice in favor of a first love, an unpolluted embrace, and a spotless father for her children; she believed that a good name and an honor which is supplied by but one parent, can only be a one-sided honor. In fact, she was foolish enough to believe that the present broad, generous reasoning which so kindly forgives the man and visits eternal shame upon the woman, is all wrong and needs remodelling.

She had been strengthened in these foolish opinions by the marriage of her dearest friend, Nettie Wicklow; and the recital of a conversation between the two confidants will probably give the reader an additional insight into the foolishness of Gessia's nature.



It was back in Canton where Gessia had known and loved her friend ; Nettie had married Tom Brandon, and Gessia felt satisfied that her friend's happiness was assured ; but one day there came a strange and sad revelation. It had taken place one Sunday afternoon when Gessia was in her room at her boarding-place. She was sitting reading when Net abruptly entered, saying as she did so :

"Gessia, I've come over to bother you. Tom has gone off with some of the boys ; and I'm so lonesome and tired. Will I annoy you ?"

"No indeed ! I was lonesome too. I'm glad you've come."

"And Gessia, I'm so worn out ; I was calling yesterday—I hate calling ; its so meaningless and shallow—like everything else. May I lie down on your bed ? I'll kick off my slippers."

"Of course, Net." How pretty she looked in her soft cream colored dress—all brides should wear cream or white until the honeymoon is well over—with her soft brown hair in that pretty coronet on the top of her head, and the fluffy curls falling over her white forehead. She patted the pillow and then plunged into it ; but as she did so, Gessia observed that the movement was one of nervousness and restlessness rather than the old-time playfulness. So she said :

"You are tired, Net ; I'll put on my new blue silk, that I've been hoarding for so long, and cheer you up."

"Well, trot it out. Anything for a change." The answer was short and sour. Gessia could not understand the change in her friend who was wont to be the gayest of the gay ; but perhaps she was sick—of course there was nothing else to make her cross, with such a good, kind husband as Tom. The new dress, though rather plainly fashioned, was very pleasing to the eye. Its long skirt and its graceful draperies fell about Gessia's fine form in exquisite folds. As she shook out the shining loveliness, she turned to her friend and said :

"Now Net, isn't that just neatness itself ?"

Net put up her lip and said :

"Why didn't you make that skirt shorter ? It doesn't lack half an inch of touching the floor all around."

"O, I like my skirts long, so that when the wind blows, there is no danger of my hose showing. This is no longer than the skirt you are wearing, Net."



"Yes, but this is my skirt and that is yours; if I believed in women's rights, like you do Gessia, I'd wear trousers."

"Now, Net, you are cross. Who said I believed in women's rights? I said I thought it was all right for a woman to be let vote if she wants to; but I don't want to vote. But if I did want to ever so much, I wouldn't think that any reason why I should be immodest in my dress. I never thought that women ought to dress like men in the least, although I often say that they spend time and money on dress that ought to be spent elsewhere."

"O yes, I am cross, Gessia; and you're a little angel. I knew it all; but yet I intend to spend just as much of my time and money on dress as I possibly can."

"Why, Net, you used to talk so differently!"

"I know I did. But I've learned a good many things, and I expect you will before you're ten years older. I've found out that the world isn't worth quite so much self-denial as you and I used to plan. But I'm not going to fret about it. I'm just going to start in and have a good time—dance, and dress, and flirt."

"Why, Net," said Gessia in astonishment; "has marriage disappointed you?"

"Oh, I'll not say that it has. Tom is as good as any man, and better than the most of them; but then marriage isn't just what I thought it would be. Men are all mean in some way or other, and you might just as well make up your mind to it. I believe that nine out of every ten men run with mean women, and that the other one is too cranky to live with."

"Well, I'll take the crankiness;" said Gessia firmly.

"I won't," snapped Net. "I've concluded, Gessia, that a man has got to get rid of his meanness in some way, and if the men decide that a great lot of women shall go to the devil for their sake, why, we can't help it, that's all. We are nobody."

"Oh, Net, how you have changed! Well, I can't and won't believe that all men are so bad; but if I have to put up with meanness in a man, I will take any other kind in preference to vile associations. I had rather a man would quarrel with me, starve me, or even raise his hand and strike me; yes, Net, I could forgive a man a blow easier than I could forgive him another woman. I know



it is just as natural in a high-minded woman to want a pure, clean love, as it is in a man—it is more so even, for she has nothing but her love and her husband.”

“Oh yes, Gessia, and it is just as natural for a poor mill-hand to want turkey and cranberry sauce for his dinner, as it is for his rich employer; but that is no sign that he gets them. It’s no use, Gessia. I’m just going to pretend I don’t care—dress up and have a good time.”

Gessia looked pale and distressed. Net noticed her changed look and said:

“Why don’t you speak, girl? You’re always so ready.”

“I am afraid I’d say what ought not to be said.”

“Oh, out with it! I’ve got the blues to-day. I don’t care what you say.”

“Well it’s this: there’ll be a time when you are old, Net, and then the dancing—”

“Oh, I’ll try and die before I get old.”

“But, Net, how can you have his arms around you—and let him kiss you—and live with him all the time, and not think of those other women?”

Net leaped into a sitting posture.

“Gessia, *don’t!*” she shrieked. “If you speak like that there can never be even the semblance of friendship between us! I’m married to him—I’m tied to him—and I’ve got to live with him—and I don’t dare think of such things; it’s worse than scalding pitch to burn into my soul. Never open your mouth to speak like that, Gessia, if you want me to keep my reason! Don’t shake my chains till their rattle drives me wild!”

Gessia trembled under the storm she had raised; she sank down into a chair with the bright silk dress in careless confusion, and began to sob hysterically.

“Don’t cry, dear,” said Net, as she arose and began to smooth her friend’s hair; “I had no right to tell you. Each person ought to take care of his own trouble, and we women will all have enough to keep us busy. Don’t cry. I must go. Good-bye,” and Net drew on her slippers, donned her hat, and left the room.

Gessia had never felt at home with her friend after that. She had already made arrangements to go to Colorado, where she thought employment at teaching music would be more constant and sure, and wages better; and when at last the broad plains were between her and her dear



friend, whose destiny was so painful, she was almost thankful to be separated from her.

. . . . .

It is the evening of the ball in Deer Trail Park, where nearly everybody is to be present. Gessia is to go with John Solomon. She met him about a month before the date of the ball, and it was impossible to deny that her thoughts often dwelt long upon the tall, dark, handsome young man. She was a little alarmed when she found her thoughts turning to him the first thing when she awoke in the morning, and lingering about his image until the last rational thought had been succeeded by dreams at night. She sometimes started with surprise, that her thoughts confined themselves to one man, instead of wandering among her masculine acquaintances; she wondered if it were the tyrant Love, of which she had heard and read. If it were so, would it be unpleasant? Were not those hands strong enough to win bread for her? Were not those great, dark eyes true? If it were really love, should she bid it cease? Strange, yet in one month's time she had learned to love—to follow the lead of one of the careless little archer's arrows. But though her soul was lured, she knew it not yet. As she dressed for the ball she debated whether or not it were so. She donned the beautiful blue silk, and sighed as she buttoned the bodice over her white throat, because the dress made her think of poor Net. Then she arranged the soft cream lace about her neck, and wondered if John would think it becoming; she fastened a spray of cream roses upon her bosom, and asked herself whether John's eyes would approve; she placed a shell butterfly in the coronet of braids upon her head, and wondered if John's glance would linger upon it; she turned the one ring upon her finger, and wondered if John would ask permission to place another there. Then the rich warm color mounted to her fair cheek, and again she asked herself if it were love. When her toilet was complete she walked out of her little room, down the stairs and into the sitting-room, to be admired by Mrs. Sheldon, her landlady. John was already in waiting. Was she right? Were his eyes hungry as they dwelt upon her? She was sure that his hands were unsteady as he held her long cloak while she slipped her arms into the sleeves. They were soon seated in John's comfortable carriage, headed toward Deer Trail Park. Oh, how delightful the



drive was! John never talked nonsense—there was always something agreeable to be discussed; he had read much and well; and if his perception was a little slow, why, that only made him the more agreeable contrast to his quick-witted, ready companion.

The people who attend the grand balls in splendid city mansions, do not have all the enjoyment that is to be found in dancing. There is a restraint, a law of etiquette, a rule of decorum, and a fear of some one else's ball surpassing this one, that tends to create bitterness where mirth should reign supreme. It was not so with the "dance" at the residence of Mr. Newton Blanding in Deer Trail Park. Here all met upon an equal footing; there were present a half dozen of the first young people of Milroy City, but they were received with no more kindness and hospitality than were the cow-boys from the ranches round about. All seemed to throw aside restraint and to court good fellowship and enjoyment. Of course there were a few persons of doubtful character present, but then such might be found at city balls also. The large roomy mansion of hewed pine logs, the candles burning everywhere, the long fire of crackling pine, the juniper boughs over the windows, the merry violins, and last but not least, the delightful odors which ever and anon slipped from the kitchen into the long sitting-room, where two "sets" were merrily tripping the light fantastic toe, to the pleasant air, "The Girl I left Behind Me," all seemed to argue that the evening would be a success.

After Gessia had laid aside her wraps in the dressing-room upstairs, she was met at the door by John, who led her down to where the dancing was in progress.

"I have looked over the crowd," he said, "and you need not be afraid to enjoy yourself. There is no whiskey here, and the crowd is as good as can be expected."

"And why are you so particular?" she asked with an arch smile.

"Why, I know that I ought not to bring you into a crowd that is not respectable."

"Certainly not," she answered; then she grew suddenly grave and continued: "But, Mr. Solomon, I would not hesitate to go among the worst people if by so doing I could benefit them."

"Well," answered John, "I should'nt like to be always tied to low people, and have to run with them."



"Nor I. But those who have strayed from the straight path may be benefited; they cannot be made sinless, because the past can never be recalled; but by our encouragement we may induce them to quit their evil ways and help others."

"But you ought not to be seen talking to such, Miss Antwerp. A young lady's good name is easily clouded."

"Oh, ho! ho!" came in a rippling gurgle from Gessia's white throat.

"What are you laughing at?" asked John, half vexed.

"Why, you men are so very particular about the good names of the young ladies you appear in public with. And yet you, Mr. Solomon, do not hesitate in the least to allow yourself to be seen talking to those Nolan boys that such dreadful stories are going about."

"Well, I know those Nolan boys *are* dogs—perfect dogs. But then you see—you know, Miss Antwerp—a man has business to attend to—he has to mix with the world, even if it does not exactly suit him. But then I keep as clear of such as I can. They are just forming again. Let's stand at the head of the first set." And John, proud to exhibit the lovely lady at his side, took his place in the most conspicuous position in the room.

The violins played "Captain Jenks," and Gessia soon forgot her argument as she hurried through the dizzy whirl. When that dance was done, she danced with Bill Ely, then with the eldest of the Price boys, then with Dan Miller, the best shot on the Creek, then with Ed Holcomb; and then, tired and exultant, she found a chair at the upper end of the room, partially screened by a large bundle of overcoats upon the back of another chair; she trusted to the coats to shield her from seekers after partners, for she wished to rest from the merry amusement. But the screen was not effective; she saw Mr. De Kalb coming toward her. She had met him but twice; would he ask her to dance? She hoped not, she was tired.

"Are you going to ask me to dance?" she asked gaily, as she held up one finger as a warning.

"No, indeed, I am not; at least not yet. I came over to protect you from yourself. I have seen you flying about all the evening, and feared you were taking too much exercise; here, let me wrap this around you; you are so warm and the fire is so far away." And he took down from a nail on the wall, the long knitted scarf which he had worn



to protect his throat and breast from the sharp air of the highland night. He wrapped its fleecy folds about her, even winding it over her arms, pinioning them to her sides.

"And what have I done to be shackled thus?" she asked; "what crime have I committed?"

"The crime of wearing thin sleeves. You have nothing but lace below your elbows. When I saw you come over here, I knew why you had come—that you were tired of dancing, and wanted to rest; but I knew you would take cold, and that brought the thought of my mother; she was never strong, and she told me that her ill health was greatly aggravated by exposure when she was in society. She died when I was but ten years old, and my life has been only half a life since. And now if you do not object, I will sit here and act as knight-errant on this side, while the overcoats protect you from partner-hunters on that."

A wave of pleasure swept over Gessia's face. Life was very sweet; the scent of the juniper boughs, the merry crackle of the burning logs, the gaily dressed and laughing guests, and this kind, noble man by her side, all preached the doctrine of universal happiness.

"But," she asked; "are you not warm? Will you not take cold?"

"No; I have danced but little; I am not unnaturally warm."

Then followed a long conversation upon books, music, art, and all manner of delightful things. The ball, the music, the gay company were all forgotten, until one of the floor-managers slapped De Kalb on the shoulder and informed him that his number was being called for the third time.

"Do you feel sufficiently rested for some more of this delightful nonsense?" asked De Kalb of Gessia.

"Oh yes; I shall feel proud to tread a measure with my knight protector."

She met the eyes of John Solomon; he was half frowning and evidently displeased. She was pained. That old fear that her beauty and vivacity might do some one wrong, arose within her. She feared that John was jealous, and moreover she feared that she did not want him to be jealous, or displeased with her in any way. Mr. De Kalb was very pleasant and intelligent, but she did not think of him as a suitor whom she could encourage. She could not imagine such questions flitting through her



brain in regard to him as had that very evening assailed her in reference to John. So she resolved to encourage Mr. De Kalb no more, and to let the future take its course. She attended no more balls in Deer Trail Park, and as Mr. De Kalb's school closed shortly after the Blanding party, he went into the northern part of the State without meeting her again.

She and John were together almost constantly during their unemployed hours; they took delightful gallops over the hills, they took long drives in John's buggy, they walked out to the near hills to get gypsum to cut statuettes from; they talked, they confided in each other, they sang and they loved. They seemed to agree upon every subject; life in each other's presence was life divine, and life separated from each other was little better than death. And one evening as they walked in from the gypsum beds, they paused in the gathering dusk because they found that the words had some how been spoken which pledged them as husband and wife. Both were surprised that the question had been asked and answered—it must have been the outcome of nature—but it was over, and Gessia was clasped in her lover's arms to receive her kiss of betrothal.

After she arrived at her boarding-place, she went to her little room to think it over. Oh, the exultant happiness! The wild throbbing of her heart that threatened to burst its walls. But how she pitied poor Net, who would never be happy, she was sure. She had asked John if he approved of men doing as the Nolan boys did; and he had answered indignantly that he did not. She laid her head upon her pillow while her lips moved in prayer for rich blessings upon her betrothed.

Upon awaking in the morning she again thought it all over; she had known him a little less than half a year; but the neighbors, who had known him all his life, spoke nothing but good of him; there *was* nothing but good, and so why even think it over? She had no parents to consult, they had left her long ago; and her aunt had often said, that in matters of marriage, each person must choose for himself. Her aunt was her nearest relative. Gessia would write and tell her what she had done and ask her blessing. Gessia was sure that if she was suited the world ought to be; for was it not herself that had to live with him?

There is no occasion for making a short story long;



humanity's time is too valuable to be wasted over lengthy descriptions of ordinary occurrences; and love and marriage, while infinitely grand in themselves, are common everyday occurrences. An engagement is a very unsatisfactory state of affairs; it causes the parties interested to think too much upon a state where there is no parting; and it is impossible to dwell too much upon future bliss without allowing present joys to pass unnoted. John became so much the victim of happiness to come, that upon the evening, just forty-eight hours after the promise had been given, he came over to talk seriously to Gessia. Gessia had said that it should be in three months. John saw no use of putting it off. The cottage on his ranch would do very well to begin with—it could be made larger after a few years. It had five rooms, and all they needed was a coat of paint and kalsomine. He had no furniture but such as bachelors keep house with, and he and the hired man had only pretended to use three of the rooms. But there were some beef cattle to sell that would pay for carpets and furniture, and even a piano, provided pianos did not come too high. The whole house could be made to look like Eden in a week, and it was so lonesome; he never knew how lonesome it was until she promised to come and brighten it up. Why was not this day, a week, the very best of times? There was a painter and paper-hanger annoying the life half out of him for a job—his wife and children needed every description of comforts. Then Gessia was worrying her life almost away trying to teach the youth of Boulder Creek to get a little music out of their parlor organs without spreading the idea of an Indian outbreak. What had she to say to this day a week?

Gessia thought it over for a few moments; after all, why should they wait three months? Was she not two-and-twenty, and capable of knowing her mind? She decided that the three months was a mistake, and that this day a week was just about the proper time. After arriving at this decision, she had to submit to a storm of caresses from John, but then they were not disagreeable. Then John shortened his call; there was the paper-hanger and painter to hunt up; plaster of Paris had to be ordered, along with glue, window glass (the latter article is often sadly needed in the repair of bachelor premises), carpets, furniture, and no end of things. Gessia was taken along to help select the finer articles, and then it became widely known that



"John Solomon was going to marry the pretty music teacher, that did not have a dollar to her name." There was a fearful din within the neat cottage; the dust flew as it had never flown before, and ere the week was out the new furniture and carpets were in. And upon the evening named, Gessia summoned her music pupils to her boarding-place, while John brought out his mother and the Rev. Mr. Sharp, who was celebrated in no small degree for his long sermons. The ceremony was of course rather long, but then perhaps that was well, as it was the only feature of the wedding; the pupils cried, and good Mrs. Sheldon wiped her eyes, while her susceptible husband coughed frequently. The groom's mother, however, looked rather severe; the bride was pretty enough and smart enough, she told herself, but then those everlasting lost cows! John had not displayed the business tact she would have liked to see. But then young men would be young men, and as he was her only son she would stand by him.

The marriage had taken place at five in the evening; so immediately after the congratulations, John took his mother and the minister back to town; then he returned to escort his bride to her new home.

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## CHAPTER V.

### A SHADOWED WEDDING.

HAS the reader ever noticed how one wedding in a neighborhood produces a perfect storm of love-making and marriage? Why is it that the bliss of one happy couple incites others to seek similar bliss, or at least to make a similar venture for bliss?

Within a week after the marriage of John and Gessia, two more weddings took place in the Boulder Creek neighborhood; one being that of Sam Ely and Kittie Smith, and the other that of Frank Hatton and Sallie Lentz.

Now if the reader will shoulder a very large bag-ful of self-control, and send his mind to this latter wedding, he may rest assured that no harm will befall him therefor. It took place on Tuesday evening; the Solomon wedding



had taken place on the Monday, and the whole neighborhood was busy talking about the occurrence. It was now late in the afternoon and Parson Blakesly of the —— church, Milroy City, was leaning against his garden fence, carefully studying a little cloud which hung over the hazy range, trying to ascertain whether said cloud meant snow or only wind; for in the windy, deceptive, fickle month of March, who can tell what storms may rage within twenty-four hours? To be sure the sun was shining warm enough just now to induce the bees out of their hives; but what might the mercury of to-morrow tell? Let the reader not inquire in what church Mr. Blakesly officiated as pastor; if the secret were told the charge would be investigated and every church in Colorado arise *en masse* and vehemently declare, swear, assert, and affirm, that no such unorthodox, cranky, down-at-the-heel minister ever disgraced its pulpit. The afflicted church often excused itself for having such a pastor; the members were poor, and even if they were able to pay a larger salary, they could not raise money enough to build a new parsonage; and not every minister would be as content in the little adobe kennel as was Mr. Blakesly. Then there was Mrs. Blakesly; she of course, was cranky too; but then she was an excellent nurse, and often saved the church members paying doctor bills; then too, Mr. Blakesly mended boots and shoes at low wages all the week, and thus took nearly all the burden of his support off his church's shoulders. The dollars and dimes thus saved to the members took away part of the sting caused by the unorthodox sermons, but not all. The church was often called upon to apologize for the erratic proceedings of its pastor.

The old man stood watching the cloud; his long face was marked with heavy lines that showed deep thought and perhaps heavy burden; but neither time nor trouble had dimmed the lustre of his warm gray eyes, in which kindness and benevolence shone. The thin gray hair about his temples, his tall emaciated form, and his thin, long hands, gave him the aspect of one who is well-nigh ready to lay down the burdens of life. But perhaps this gaunt aspect arose more from hardships and privation than from the flight of years; for although the world did not know, Mr. and Mrs. Blakesly had often gone supperless to bed because some one else was hungry. As the cloud began to lighten and spread, the minister suddenly per-



ceived a seedy young man standing before him; the visitor's frame was massive and tall, with powerful, muscular arms and hands; but the brand of dissipation was prominent upon his heavy features, and wine and revelry had cast a film over eyes that had once been clear, honest, and kindly. "Good evening, Sir;" said the young man; "I believe you are a minister."

"Good evening! Good evening! Yes. Well now, I don't count on being much of a minister, but then I try to do my best to hold the church together. Open the gate and come in."

"No, I thank you. I may as well tell you my business at once. My name is Hatton, and I want to be married this evening. I've been to every preacher in town, but they won't come—seem to think I'm setting a trap for 'em, or something. The girl lives down at Old Fat Sue's place. Sallie Lentz that's my girl's name—and I—are going to turn over a new leaf. I could git a justice, but Sallie wants a preacher. We're all ready, but the preachers all seem above going to such a place." Mr. Blakesly nodded vehemently, then strode to the front door and threw it wide open.

"Nancy," he shouted; "put on your best black alpaca and your new bonnet; there's going to be a wedding down at Sue's place. Mr. Hatton is going to be married to Miss Lentz."

"Yes, Eben, I'll be there in a minute," came the answer clear and decisive.

The minister came back to the fence. Hatton was perfectly dumbfounded.

"You don't mean, do you, for your lady wife to go down there among those bad women?" he asked with a gasp.

"And why not?" asked the minister, reaching his hand over the fence and grasping that of Hatton. "If circumstances had been with your bride as they have been with my wife, one would have been as pure as the other; and if my little adobe church at the end of the garden there, were suddenly transformed into a mighty cathedral, whose organ would sound to the skies, it would not make me so joyful as what you have told me. The average man who sins against holy love, and who finds only bitterness to result therefrom, will, as the first vindication of a changed life, desert and revile and refuse to help the women who



have been his companions. His morals, however, are not improved, as he would fondly believe; no, for he has added injustice and ingratitude to his sin, and not all the acclamations of society can atone for the wrong he does when he takes a pure woman to wife. But, Hatton, you are a brave man, and if the justice of the Lord is sure, as I believe it is, you will prosper and be happy."

By this time Mrs. Blakesly emerged from the front door, industriously tying her bonnet-strings. She was more stoutly built than her husband, and two black eyes danced with cheer beneath her gray hair.

"Now here," said the minister, "you just talk to Mrs. Blakesly while I put on a clean collar, and brush my hat." But Frank did not talk to Mrs. Blakesly; the world was changing too rapidly around him; for years he had considered himself the most sordid of brutes; and now here was a minister of the gospel telling him that he was a hero. He looked down at the figure he was drawing with his heel in the sanded walk, while great tears fell from his eyes. He was mentally resolving that the fearful weight of calumny and shame which he knew society would cast upon himself and his wife, and upon himself for choosing such a wife, should never keep them down. No, they, hand in hand, would disregard the world, and rise in spite of its frown. He knew that if he could succeed in winning a spotless woman, and would heartlessly cast aside her who loved him in spite of his filth, that the world would forget his crimes; but the same world which would have forgiven him the ruin of a dozen women, as soon as he professed that he had done sowing wild oats, would never overlook the fact that he had righted one woman's wrongs. But he remembered that the advice of his companions was what had led him wrong at first. He had never gained much by listening to the world, and he resolved from this on to listen to his conscience. As in a dream he heard the door of the parsonage closed; then he heard the gate shut to, and the minister and his wife step out into the walk. The old couple chatted pleasantly about the beautiful day as they walked by his side, but he answered not, nor did he raise his eyes until the trio paused at Old Sue's door. Frank opened the door and motioned his companions to enter; they found themselves in a room with soiled, tawdry furniture, and a carpet that had once been gay and bright,



but was now faded and soiled. Five weary, faded, spiritless looking women arose to greet them. Frank went through the formula of introduction :

"Mr. and Mrs. Blakesly, Mrs. Brown; Miss Orange; Miss Nelson; Miss Allen; then he approached a pale, shivering creature who stood apart, and taking her hand, laid it in that of Mrs. Blakesly; "Miss Lentz," he said in a low tone; as the girl felt the touch of that pure, warm hand, she reeled a moment and half fell, her bridegroom supported her and she bowed her burning face upon that wrinkled hand; wild, fierce sobs broke in quick succession from her lips, and her slender form shook like one of the mountain aspens that were bending to the breezes far above her. Her wild sobs became infectious and every woman in the room, save Old Sue, wept for company. Old Sue—or Mrs. Brown by courtesy—had, instead of feelings, the coarsest of human attributes, and she looked with disgust and alarm upon the tears of her girls; she had been greatly opposed to Sallie's marriage, and now what if her other girls should also be induced to leave her!

"O Sallie," said Frank, as he wiped his own red and bloodshot eyes; "don't take on so; I told 'em we were going to do better." Mrs. Blakesly quietly soothed the bride, and so gentle and sweet was her manner that calm was soon restored. The parties then seated themselves and a short conversation was indulged in. The minister ought of course to have hurried through this disreputable business as quickly as possible, pocketed his fee, and hurried home; but there was a quiet eloquence in the faces of these sad, lost creatures, that appealed to both him and his wife.

The gaudy finery in which they were dressed could not give them comeliness, and the paint upon their wasted cheeks could not hide the lines of shame and sorrow which the hand of dissipation had traced; where once had been prettiness and purity were now only haggardness and sorrow. So the minister and his wife talked for them, but not of their deep sinfulness. They talked of the beautiful weather, of the great climatic advantages of the town, of the prospects for an early Spring, and of the lovely view of the mountains to be had from their window. The women answered only in monosyllables; and though the sobs had ceased, many a tear continued to fall upon



wasted hands, for the gentle current of the talk carried them back to a time when life had been better than it was now. Finally there was a pause; it was broken by Frank Hatton, who said in an unsteady voice:

"Well, Mr. Blakesly, I believe we are ready whenever you are." The minister rose to his feet, and as he did so the other occupants of the room followed his example. Frank stepped to the side of his bride, and to support her trembling form, drew her hand through his arm.

"My friends;" said the minister, "we are met together to join two loving hearts in marriage. It is written that it is not good for man to be alone; therefore God has given him woman to be a helpmate to him, to share his joys, to lessen his sorrows, and to create for him that surest of refuges from sorrow and evil, a home. Now I request these two dear friends, who are already united in heart, to join their right hands. Frank, do you take this woman whom you hold by the hand to be your true and loving wife?"

"I do;" came the answer in a hoarse whisper.

"Sallie, do you take this man whose hand you clasp to be your true and loving husband?"

"I do," came the answer with a sob.

"Then I pronounce you to be husband and wife; and what the Lord in love and affection has joined together, let not man put asunder. Let us pray. Oh God, our loving Father, we ask Thee to look down and bless the two loving and penitent hearts which are henceforth one. We ask Thee to look down in tender mercy upon the inmates of this house, and to let the day of their deliverance be near at hand; bless thy unfortunate children everywhere and hasten the day which shall punish the offender rather than the victim. We feel, O Lord, that Thou art mighty to save, and we ask Thy blessing, for the sake of one who paused to teach the truth even to such as these, Amen."

All had knealt as with one impulse at the words, "Let us pray." They now arose simultaneously, and the poor girls clung sobbing together, while the minister and his wife congratulated the bride and groom. Mrs. Blakesly kissed the bride, and spoke hopefully of the future—she even so far forgot herself as to whisper in her ear an invitation to tea the next evening. The reader is doubtless quaking at the awful recklessness of the Blakeslys;



but then it is to be remembered that people are always braver when they have nothing to lose. Mr. Blakesly had but little to lose, and he preferred being blameless before his conscience rather than before his congregation ; and his wife—well, people, when speaking of her, always said that she was just as cranky as her husband.

When the congratulations were over there was an anxious consultation among the inmates of the house. It was carried on in whispers, and was finally brought to a close by Sue pushing forward the girl who had been introduced as Miss Nelson and saying :

“Go on, Jen.” The girl stepped up to Mrs. Blakesly in evident embarrassment and said :

“Sue wants to know if you’ll stay and eat supper with us, ma’am.”

“Well now,” said Mrs. Blakesly, “It’s real kind of you to think of it. It’s quite a walk down here, and I don’t care if I do eat a bite. But don’t go to any trouble.”

There was a hurried exit of all the females save the bride, and the humming of a kettle and the clatter of dishes announced that a meal was being prepared. Presently Jen entered the room, and coming close to Mrs. Blakesly, said in a low tone :

“We thought you might not like to sit along with us ; so you can eat first if you’d rather.”

“My sister,” was the answer ; “I had rather not. Let me sit along with you. I shall not enjoy my supper unless my hostesses eat with me.”

The meal was soon announced. Mr. and Mrs. Blakesly were shown to the head of the table, but they objected to this ; the bride and groom must have the first place ; so Frank and Sallie sat at the head of the table, side by side, with the minister at the side of the table nearest the bride, and his wife on the opposite side nearest the groom. Beside the minister sat poor Jennie Nelson, and next to Mrs. Blakesly sat the two other girls, while Sue sat at the lower end of the table and took charge of the teapot. An effort had been made to put a respectable look upon things, but still the garish air which pervaded the whole house was to be found on the table ; it had a look of showy wretchedness. The supper consisted of baker’s bread and cakes, butter, canned fish, canned fruit, and tea ; it was not home-like ; it was all soulless food, unsanctified by home preparation—it was bought, like the poor creatures who served



it. But there was no wine on the table ; while supper was preparing, one of the girls had brought forward a decanter and glasses, but Jen had said " No ! no ! They will not be pleased ;" and the decanter and glasses had disappeared.

During supper, the clerical pair carried on a lively and cheerful conversation, drawing the girls out and making them talk ; Mrs. Blakesly talked in a general way about the great scarcity of kitchen help and sewing girls and the excellent wages paid.

" I used to be a sewing girl ;" said Jennie, bursting into tears. " It was in New York, five years ago. But the wages were so poor, and times were so hard. I used to make fine white shirts for seven cents a piece ; and things to eat and rooms were so dear. Mother was sick and had to have medicine, and it seemed impossible to pay for all the things needed. I went to my employer one day, after I had been working a year and a half, and told him that I had to keep mother and that she was sick, and that I thought I had been faithful enough to him to have my wages increased. He said that he would do so if I would give up my honor, but I told him I'd die first. But when I went home and found mother sicker than ever, and no fire, and no money to pay a doctor, and not half bed-clothes enough to keep her warm, I got desperate. My employer came to me the next day and asked me if I'd decided to take his offer and I told him I had. I bought some blankets and coal and employed a doctor, and when mother asked me where I'd got money, I just told her my pay was increased for being faithful. She was satisfied, but she died in a few weeks, and I was glad of it. I didn't want her to live to know. I knew it was wrong of me, but I couldn't hear mother cough in that cold room and not do what I could for her. Pretty soon he got tired of me and discharged me, and told all around that he had been keeping me, and then I couldn't get decent employment. It seemed as if everybody in the city either knew what I was or would find out in few days ; I came out here, and was doing well till one day I met a man that knew me in New York, and then everybody found out all about me and I gave up and came to the dance-house."

The story ended in a sob.

" Miss Nelson," said Mrs. Blakesly, " I know several good, sensible women who want girls to help about the



house and do sewing. If you will come home with me to-night, I will try to find some one to take you."

"Oh," sobbed Nannie Allen; "I was treated worse even than Jen. I was engaged to marry a young man, and he threatened me that if I didn't give up to him that he'd say I had, and ruin my good name; but if I would he'd marry me and be good to me. I loved him, and gave up to him, and pretty soon I got into trouble. Then he wouldn't marry me, and I was going to law him; but he got about half a dozen young men who agreed with him that they'd swear that I was common, and they had had as much to do with me as he had. I saw it was no use to fight him, so I withdrew the suit, and resolved that if there was no law to protect us, that I and the little baby would just go to ruin. My folks wouldn't let me stay at home; my little baby came dead, and I took to this. But I always regretted one thing. I wish to this day that I'd killed that man; for I'd rather have murder on my conscience than what I've got."

Then the minister shook his head. "No my sister," he said; "be thankful that you did not. After all, it is better to be the victim than the tyrant. Be thankful that you have been wronged rather than regret that you did not commit a crime. The man may have deserved death, for he deserted his child and ruined its mother; but the Lord is the one to avenge. Be thankful that there is no blood upon your hands; it is far nobler to suffer than to inflict suffering.

Then Tillie Orange spoke. "I was only fourteen years old," she said, "when I was left an orphan. I hired out to a man who was a church member to keep house and do general house work. I was strong and healthy, and I knew all about work; so I thought I would do well. People all told me how thankful I ought to be for such a good place; my mistress was kind to me, and I was happy and satisfied. But pretty soon that man got to insulting me every time he saw me alone. I complained to a neighbor woman who belonged to the same church, and she told me she didn't believe me; that my master was too good a man; and that if there was anything in it, it was my fault. Then she told me that I'd better keep still or I'd lose my character, and be talked about. Then I tried to get another place; but he found it out, and told it round that I wasn't worth wages.



I had no home, and after what he'd told I couldn't get another place, so I stayed on. He kept coaxing and bribing and threatening till finally he had his will. After a while I found that I was going to be in trouble and disgrace, and I told him so. He turned me out of doors, and laid the blame on the stable-boy, and he was a good young man, if ever there was one. Master raised a great fuss, and told what a disgrace had come to his house, and said that he'd make the stable-boy marry me. But I said that he shouldn't—that no one but the guilty one should right my wrongs. Then he cried around before his wife and the neighbors, and declared it was a plot between me and the stable-boy to ruin him, and get money; and, of course, everybody believed him. I had to go to the poor-house, and my baby was born there. I went to work as soon as he was old enough to be taken out, and did the best I could. He lived to be eight years old, and I never loved anything or anybody but him, and yet I was glad to see him die. The people where I worked just called him a bastard, and kicked and cuffed him about till I got to hating them, so that many a time I was tempted to kill some of them. Finally he took scarlet fever and died; and then I wrote to his father and told him that he need not try to get to heaven; that I'd sent a witness there that would tell his story and bar the door to him forever. I just hated everybody; so I took to this, and I don't see any way out of it but the river."

The bride now spoke; "Its no use of me telling a long story," she said. "I know I'm to blame, but I can't believe that I'm so guilty as some one else. I had no mother, and father was a drunkard. I started to going with a young man that I thought wanted to marry me and give me a home, but I found out better. He got me to doing wrong when I was only sixteen years old. People call him a leading citizen now, and me an old strumpet, and somehow I can hardly believe it's all right."

A dark flush mantled the face of the bridegroom; for once the lines of dissipation disappeared beneath the storm of fury which arose. At last he spoke with thick, heavy utterance:

"Yes," he said; "eleven years ago Sallie here was a pure sweet girl of sixteen, and I was a boy of eighteen, as good and hopeful as any you'd find. Ike Ransom was older than either of us; he got Sallie to doing wrong, and



kept at me until he got me to drinking and running to the dance-house. After a while he married, and by cheating people, and getting hold of cattle somehow or other, he has got to be a rich man and an influential citizen. Sallie and I are two of his victims."

"My son," said the minister warningly; "be not discouraged. The ordeal of fire through which your bride and yourself have been forced may have burned away all your cruelty and selfishness, and may have prepared you for the noblest of lives. The world is full of dark places, and those whose eyes have long been accustomed to darkness are the proper ones to go into these gloomy haunts and lead the struggling inmates out to the light of day. When we, who are most accustomed to day go there, we see only darkness; our eyes cannot discern the human beings who are there struggling with guilt. It is possible for you and your bride to rise to the noblest heights of excellence. And to the lady who has told of the perfidy of her church-going master, I have this to say: it is the awful truth,—the more shame to the church that it is so—but it is the truth, that the church harbors villany just as deep and as subtle as does the State prison. But let us not for this reason lose faith in true religion, and in the mercy and justice of God. Because evil rushes up and strives to stand at the right hand of good, we must not lose respect for the guiltless; they are even more to be honored, because they have remained unsullied in spite of their polluted surroundings."

"Sir," said Tillie Orange, "I ask you to do me a favor, the last I shall ever ask of you."

"I will do it gladly," answered the minister; "but hope that it may not be the last."

"It is this; that before you go to rest to-night, that you and your wife kneel down and offer to the God you serve, one fervent prayer for the rest and peace of my soul. Although I have completely lost faith in the efficacy of religion, as the world applies it, and in the good of churches as the world rears them, I still believe in a God whose ears are open to the wailings of absolute despair, and I believe that you and your wife are two of his ambassadors; and I ask that you do not pray for the welfare of my body, nor for my earthly happiness; for I am as a straw swept over a cataract, and it is just as futile for me to attempt to climb back to happiness and respectability as for the straw



to ascend the falling torrent to its place of starting. But pray for my soul. It may be that the Lord you serve has fitted up a place of rest and solace for such as I; and if you believe that he has, pray that my soul may therein find refuge from these torrents of shame that never upon earth will cease to beat against me." And before anyone could reply she arose, and left the room. Mrs. Blakesly softly whispered something in the ear of Nannie Allen.

The sun had long since set and the dusk was beginning to gather. Mrs. Blakesly and Mrs. Hatton began to don their wraps, for Frank had said that Sallie was not to stay another night in that house. Together with Jennie Nelson and their husbands they bade good-night to Sue and Nannie, and passed into the street. Scarcely had the door closed, when Sue broke out into bitter invective; she was one of those coarse, brutal creatures, who imagined that silk and velvet were better than chastity and honor; she cared only for show and gain, for rich food and highly spiced wines, and she cared not how much innocence and chastity was sacrificed so that her wants were supplied.

"The d—d old hypocrite!" she hissed; "to come here and sneak my girls away! It was bad enough for Sall to get married, without them old fools comin' here gettin' the rest discontented. Jen 'll be back here in a week or two, half starved and ready to act sensible. I hope, Nan, you ain't such a fool."

"Oh, I suppose it's the best I can do," answered the girl wearily.

"Of course it's the best you can do; you've got good clothes and good grub. What more do you want?"

"Oh Sue,—people—starve to death—on those things. I want my good name again."

"Well you'll never git that 'ere again; so you might just as well behave yourself. Where's Till?"

"I heard her upstairs awhile ago." There was now a sound of footsteps on the stairs, but Tillie Orange did not enter the parlor. Soon there came the sound of the opening and closing of the kitchen door, and then Nan saw Tillie passing the window in her plainest walking suit. She ran out and caught her hand.

"Where are you going, Till?" she asked. Till pressed her hand and drew her a little way up the street.

"Don't tell Sue, or any one" she whispered. "I'm going to the river. I hate this life. Here, take this



pocket-book ; there's enough money in it to ship my body to L—— City and bury me by my boy ; and if my body's found, I wish you'd see to it, Nan. But if they don't find it, you take the money, Nan, and use it to get to be a good woman."

"Oh let me go too, Till."

"No, you are younger. Try to be good. Kiss me. Good-bye." And without tear or sob, Till hurried up the fast-darkening street. Nan's heart was sick within her. How she hated her life, with the intolerable shame, the coarse familiarity of brutal men, the garish finery over the bleeding, suffering heart. But then she was young, and life might one day be sweet, if only she could shake off these vile associations. She was not quite ready for the river, yet how she hated that house ! But the night air was cold and sharp, and the house was her only refuge from it. She must go in, but not as she had gone before ; she entered at the kitchen door, and hurrying up stairs she closed and locked her door and wheeled her bed against it. Sue, hearing all this noise, came up and rapped angrily on the door.

"What are you about, Nan Allen?" she shrieked. "You are in my house ; open this door."

"Sue Brown ;" exclaimed Nan ; "I've locked that door to stay locked all night ; I don't intend to see any one to-night and you'd better let me alone. I've got matches in here and if you or any one else undertakes to force your way into this room, I'll set the house afire and burn it and myself up."

"I'll bring the police !" screamed Sue.

"They won't make the fire burn any slower ; and I tell you, Sue Brown, that if you don't let me alone, I'll do just what I say." Sue, after expending a deal of strength cursing, decided to let the door alone ; she went down stairs murmuring fearful threats against the Blakeslys in particular, and cranks in general, for their interference with her business.

As Nan took some thought of herself and her situation, she saw how unsafe she was ; she knew that if several determined men undertook to burst in her door, that they could readily do so before she could raise the conflagration she had threatened. She knew, too, that the gentlemen who visited Sue's house, would not hesitate to demolish her door, and would not listen to Sue's entreaties or remon-



strances. She knew that since she was the only female in the house, save the mistress, that she would not be permitted to remain hid. "Oh, if I only *could* get away from this cursed town;" she muttered. She was so young, and life was not quite all bitterness yet; the sun was still bright, the stars still twinkled, the birds still sang for her, and the river shone and rippled. If she could get away and be a good girl, perhaps some young man might love her; she would tell him all her story, and perhaps there might be a little cottage, with some pretty children playing about it; she had heard of men who were generous. But how could she get away? Who would help her? People would know her, and her story would follow her everywhere she went. But since it was worth trying, she would try. If she could disguise herself until she got out of town, the suspicion that she had suicided might arise, and thus she might keep her story from following her. Frank Hatton had often done odd jobs of work for the house, and had made it a sort of head-quarters, and now Nan remembered that there was an old blouse and a pair of old trousers of his in Sallie's room. She moved her bed as quietly as possible, unlocked her door and slipped out, secured the articles, then returned and re-locked her castle. She must be quick; she could not expect to remain undisturbed long. She went to her glass, parted her hair on one side and taking her scissors, cut it short around her head after the fashion known as "bobbed." She then dressed herself in the masculine apparel, buttoning the blouse up over her feminine underwear, and thanking fortune that the blouse was not a coat. Although she was a large girl the clothes were much too roomy for her, but she remembered that youngish-looking men sometimes wear clothes that look roomy. Then her feet—she had only her delicate feminine shoes, but over these she drew on her arctics, and these made her feet appear nearer the masculine size. She took up her winter hat and looked it over; fortune favored her—it was a broad-brimmed black felt hat; she hastily snatched off the trimmings, and although the hat was left without either band or binding, still it might pass very well for a man's slouch hat. Then she folded into as small a bundle as possible her discarded dress and the trimmings of her hat, together with needles, thread, and other little articles she might need. She also took away the locks of brown hair, lest they tell the story



of her disguise. She knew that no one would think of Frank's old clothes—might he not have taken them away? She put her purse into her pocket, unfastened her door, and went to the staircase to listen. She could hear Sue talking with some one in the parlor, but the kitchen was dark and silent. Her arctics would make no noise, so she stole softly down stairs, through the dark kitchen and out into the street, where the very air which blew upon her hot cheek seemed to breathe liberty. She hurried toward the little depot and reached it just in time to secure a ticket for a small town in a distant Western State, before the shrieking, groaning eight o'clock train came in.

About half an hour after Nannie's departure, Mr. Will Hammil, who had decided to spend the evening at Old Sue's, arrived and laughingly heard that lady's angry recital of the events of the day, and of Nan's perverseness. "Why, Tom Jackson was here a while ago, and went away rather than try to bring Nan round, after she'd locked herself up," added the mistress with great bitterness.

"Did he now? Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Mr. Hammil. "Well, I thought Tom had more sand. But she won't stand out against *me*. I'll soon get her to open the door."

And Mr. Will Hammil, who was one of the chief social lights of Milroy City, and very proud of his prowess with the ladies, hurried up stairs. But when he found the room deserted and its furniture exhibiting signs of a hasty departure, he returned to Sue, and after delivering himself of an exceeding choice and varied selection of profanity, he told Sue that if things kept on that way, that a young man wouldn't be able to have any decent enjoyment at all. Several more fastidious gentlemen soon arrived and assisted in serving up the latest styles of profanity. The chance of slipping in more girls from other towns or of seducing a few native ones was taken under advisement; for of course the town could not go on without a thriving dance-house. Then arose the present shameful state of the town—a dance-house with the girls all run away—and the profanity re-commenced. Frank Hatton was cussed for marrying one of the girls—Sallie was cussed for letting herself be married—the girls generally were cussed for so far forgetting the interests of the young men as to run away, and the Blakeslys were roundly and fearfully cussed in a way that was calculated to make the air



smell of sulphur. It may just as well be remembered right here, that the course pursued by the Blakeslys elicited more profanity from the citizens of Milroy City, than any event that had occurred in a dozen years. Old Sue and all her customers cussed, because the business was ruined; all good citizens cussed, because Mrs. Blakesly had set such a fearful example for their wives; the prominent members of the church met together and came as near cussing as their consciences would permit, because their church had been disgraced so eternally. "Of course," they said, "if the couple wanted to be married, that was all right. Why didn't they come to the minister? But the idea of him going to that house, and taking his wife, and of them shaking hands all round, and of her kissing the bride, and then of them sitting down and eating with the wretches!" Now of course, if the minister had been some young man, who had visited the house for a different purpose, the church members would have simply remarked that young men would be young men, and have speedily forgotten the matter. But Mr. Blakesly had visited the place with the purpose of saving the inmates rather than that of assisting in their destruction, and that was too serious an offense to be lightly passed over.

But after the lapse of nine days, when the cussing had somewhat subsided, one thing had to be acknowledged—the dance-house had received an exceedingly black eye. Yes, somehow, and without telling them how vile they were, the Blakeslys had awakened in the breasts of the poor girls a longing for a nobler life, in consequence of which the dance-house had melted away. For at the end of the nine days, Sallie Hatton was keeping house for her husband on the ranch he had rented; Jennie Nelson boarded with the Blakeslys and supported herself by sewing for a few people almost as cranky as themselves; Nannie Allen had fled, no one knew where; and upon the morning after the wedding, the body of Tillie Orange was taken out from among the cakes of ice on the river, with a calm on the white face never more to be disturbed in the revels of sin. The same day the minister had received a letter, mailed on the train, and signed Nannie Allen, containing a sum of money, requesting him to ship the body of Tillie Orange to L—— City. He attended to this at once. Sue tried valiantly to get more



girls, and when she found this in vain, she gave a last long wail of profanity, and shook the dust of the town from her feet.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### A DAY DREAM AND A NIGHT DREAM.

AN author is generally satisfied after he has married his heroine to the man she loves. He is content to leave her in safe hands. But the author of this work starts out with the absurd theory that love alone will not produce happiness, and she therefore proposes to follow a certain pair beyond the altar and note the peculiarities of that secret life, which, by the consent of all, is more or less hidden from the world.

John Solomon had gone to Milroy City in the morning. It had been Gessia's first day alone since her bridal, and she had made good use of it. The house fairly shone; she had polished the table-ware, cleaned the windows, swept the bright carpets and dusted the new shining furniture; she tastefully arranged the room which the hired man was to occupy, when he should come; she straightened out every tidy and re-placed every ornament in her bright little parlor. How she loved the cosy cottage, and how thoughts of John whirled along with the broom and the dusting brush! John had mentioned a hired girl! The idea! Why, keeping house for John was better than dancing in fairy land.

Supper was cooking now, and would need no attention for half an hour; so she left the buns rising, the beef slowly stewing, the potatoes baking, and the dried apricots gently simmering, and went into the parlor, where she drew up a rocker before the grate and sat down. She gazed into the fire. There was no smile upon her face, but there was ecstasy. She had been a bride two weeks, and she wondered why any one would endure single life. She felt that the burden of her bliss was more than she deserved—it was so deep, so heavenly sweet, and would be eternal, while so many women had only loads of misery.



Poor Net, now. The thought of her tempered her happiness, but could not destroy it. How sweet would be the coming years—the thought of them was like standing at the top of some palace staircase and looking down over long vistas of light and splendor, stretching away into gardens of ferns and palms, where silvery fountains forever played, where bright birds chirped and chattered, and where lovely children laughed and sang. They would live on this ranch forever, and would make of it an Eden; her old age should rest where her bridehood had exulted. When her hair was white she would still look upon these lofty trees, and upon these meadows, where grazed fat cows and sleek horses. The house would be larger. Of course it must be enlarged as the years rolled on, for there would be little children, and children need so much room in which to play and grow. How her heart exulted at the thought of them, with their dear little soft, pink faces, their sparkling mischievous eyes, and their laughter and song. How they would climb upon her lap and nestle their little warm bodies upon her arm. And John would be there, too, and the children would run and leap upon his knees, and pull his hair, and climb upon his shoulders. She would play and romp with them; then she would sing to them in the early evening until they dropped to sleep, the older ones on the carpet, and the baby in her arms. Then, still singing and crooning, she would undress them, and John would come forward and carry them away to rest. Then her husband would be all her own again; he would come and sit down beside her, draw her head upon his bosom, and then would come those sweet memories of the past and plans for the future that are so dear to married hearts.

And bye-and-bye they would be old; the children would all be gone to homes of their own, but John would be hers for time and eternity. She would still sit within his arm in the eventide and pass her wrinkled fingers through his whitening hair; his faded face would be just as comely, and his eyes as bright as now; his arm would be less strong, and would not clasp her so tightly, but his kiss would still be warm and loving and true. And when they were both very old, and their eyes dim, and their hair snow-white, death would claim them. She hoped that both would hear the summons at once, and that the kind neighbors who put them away, would place her with her head on John's arm so that their dust might mingle forever.



The cold March wind sighed and shrieked outside; it lifted the shutters and drove them forcibly against the house; its song was dismal and suggestive of cold and drear; but to Gessia it was music; it told of the warmth and security of her life, so well sheltered from winter's chilling blasts. She arose from her chair and went into the kitchen to put the buns into the oven; how beautifully the potatoes were browning; how sweet the odor of the apricots; how juicy seemed the beef, and how light and spongy were the buns; and just as the latter were turning a rich golden color, John entered the room, to clasp her in his arms and cover her face with kisses. How bright and happy was the supper hour, and how merry was the dish-washing afterward; how comically John wiped dishes—just like a man for all the world! And when the work was all done, and the dish-water thrown out into the cold and comfortless back yard, where there was no such happiness as there was in the house, John seized her in his arms and carried her away to the parlor. As he placed her in the rocker, he whispered in her ear:

"Now you musn't quarrel with me, Gessia, but I had a fuss with Bill Ely to-day."

"Was he mean to you?" asked Gessia in sudden alarm.

"Oh he is always trying to pick a quarrel with some one. I told him to-day that if he ever tried to pick another one with me, that I'd give him all the fuss he wanted. You see, Gessia, I never liked fighting, and I'd be more against it now than ever since I have you to think of; but that fellow talks so mean that I get out of all patience."

"Why need you care what he says?" asked Gessia, as she arose from her chair and seated herself on his knee. "I intend to care only for your good opinion and my own. We ought to be all the world to each other, and if neighbors want to jangle and quarrel, why let's give them to understand that we are too secure in our own happiness to care for them. I wish the neighbors well, but then I do not care for their ill favor so long as we are happy. Cheer up now." And she pushed back her sleeve and wound her warm, bare arm around his neck in the very perfection of coquetry, and pressed her warm face against his lips.

"O, John," she said; "you are worthy of adoration rather than love." John's arm tightened about her waist, but he did not speak. Why should he speak? What was there to say? He gloated over his bliss in silence,



and mentally compared the glowing beauty in his arms with the haggard creature who had been allotted to Frank Hatton.

The Hindoo planter, as he gloats over his fair bungalow, his broad fields and his rich possessions, dreams not of the earthquake which in an instant may lay waste his all, and bring the surging waves of the muddy river to lap the fair garden where once stood his home. The vine-grower on the slope of Vesuvius toils and laughs in utter disregard of the lava stream which may flow out and render him a beggar. The prairie farmer and his wife sit at their door, drinking in the exquisite air of the waning afternoon, all thoughtless of the cyclone which in half an hour may sweep by. Evil is something that is to visit some one else. We are to be spared; it will sweep by us. The earthquake, the lava stream, and the cyclone are, we fondly tell ourselves, meant for other people; and when they fall upon us, even though we invite them, we cannot understand.

At the thought of Frank Hatton, John's face darkened; "Gessia," he said, "I'm sorry about one thing."

"And what is that?"

"Why that brute of a Frank Hatton has rented the Davidson ranch, that joins ours, and has moved there. Of course he brought out that thing he married, and she'll be over there, right under your nose, and I don't see how you can help associating with her."

"Oh, don't worry about that; she won't hurt me; I'll treat her well, and that will be all there is to it."

"Oh, I'd rather you'd never speak to her; she's nothing but an old strumpet."

"Why, John, she's just as good as the men that associate with her."

John's face darkened; he had feared that his darling wife would be a little obtuse in regard to moral matters; he had heard her say things before marriage that tended to show that she believed in moral equality; it was an abominable doctrine. Ike Ransom, who was such a good business man, had said that any sensible woman would think more of a man who had been in scrapes with other women. Gessia would be a perfect angel if only he could make her see things right—only make her be sensible about moral matters. He must get these ideas out of her; a woman ought to know that her husband is a different



sort of creature from herself, and must have more privileges. This fool way of thinking, that some people had, that a man ought not to have privileges that he denied his wife, was ridiculous and fanatical, and he did not propose to tolerate any such nonsense in a wife. Of course he would be very gentle with her; but cure her he must, or there would always be trouble from her so readily expressing her opinion on such subjects. So he put on a long face.

"Now Gessia, my sweet, you are unreasonable," he began. "All men that have any enterprise go with such women more or less. It's nature. But then the women are not fit for you to associate with."

Gessia was startled. "Did you say *all* men, John?" she gasped.

"I said all that have any enterprise. I've seen a few milk-sops that would'nt go about 'em." Gessia was turning pale, and an awful fear was arising within her; she slid down from her husband's lap and stood looking at him, as if she feared he were attempting some fearful jest.

"You needn't look like a ghost," he said. "I'm not a bad man. I'm not the purest, and I'm not the worst, by any means. I believe in moderation in all things; I never went to a dance-house but about four times, and then that was away off from here, where no one that knows me would know of it."

Some blows come so quickly, so unexpectedly upon us, that our only sense is one of numbness. Gessia's world turned black; the room, the light, the crackling fire, the sweet home seclusion, all vanished, and there were left only fiends from Hell, hissing in her defenseless ears. She was not looking at her husband—not at anything. Her eyes had lost their present power of seeing, and became only windows to show the awful torture in her soul. Consciousness was gone—she had a dim sense that she had received a fearful wound, and that some hope which she had cherished for years was stricken and dying. Even her husband's slow sense was alarmed as he gazed upon her pallid face and quivering lips.

"Don't look that way, Gessia," he exclaimed. "I never stayed to laugh and joke and drink with 'em, like some fellows did."

Her husband's words brought back the subject and, partially, reason and sense. But the light that came to her



benumbed intelligence was as the beams of day, struggling through begrimed dungeon windows. She remembered what had been said—that her husband's purity and honor—all that had made life sweet and tolerable—were gone forever. But when she heard the same voice which had boasted the greater sin, disclaiming the lesser fault of jesting with the creatures he had embraced, her spirit arose within her, and with all her noble aspirations turned to venom, she resolved to do battle for her cause. But when she found her voice, it was thick and heavy; her tongue seemed covered with a deathly slime.

"I have talked and laughed with the Nolan boys," she said with husky utterance, "because I thought I might encourage them to leave off their evil ways. But even after that, I should be ashamed to boast that I had given up my body to their lust. Why do you boast the filthiest of crimes and then attempt to excuse yourself by disclaiming a peccadillo?"

O, Gessia, I never thought of it in that light; I went because—because men have to go to such places. Men can't restrain themselves. I didn't stay to talk and laugh with the women, because I hated the low creatures."

"You gave the fondest embrace to creatures to whom you were too proud to talk; let me inquire, sir, if you even paused to ask their names?"

"No," shrieked the husband; "I didn't care anything about their names. I went to them because I was suffering—that's what they are for; and they are necessary—whatever you say—I paid them like an honest man, and left them."

"John Solomon," said the trembling, stricken woman, "ask yourself whether a brute would have done worse than you have! Ask yourself whether any tribe of beasts possess a lust so fierce that they set aside a large number of the females of their kind, who must cease to bear young, cease to mingle with other females of their kind, and exist only to cool the passions of their masters?"

"Gessia, you're making a downright fool of yourself! And if you were a man you wouldn't talk so to me! I tell you, men have passions that they cannot control."

"Have they? Then how did the foul and filthy Middle Ages produce a Bayard? How do you account for our own Ellsworth, whose only mistress was his country, and upon whose bosom he died? How do you account for the



thousands of scientists and philosophers, who spent their lives inside of monasteries and died pure as they were born? When you say that men cannot control their passions you have uttered the foulest slander upon mankind. It is simply an argument to make a helpless woman yield to shame. If I believed it, I'd abandon my house and take to the woods. If we are brutes let us be brutal, and not affront nature by mingling the immortal reason of man with lust more insatiable than that of the lowest beast. You say that those women are necessary. If they are, why do you forbid me to speak to Sallie Hatton? If they are necessary, they are honorable; and their houses quite as respectable as eating-houses and hotels, and good people ought to be proud to be seen with them. No necessary human act is disgraceful!"

"Gessia! Gessia! be reasonable!"

"Reasonable? Reason as well as hope has fled. For the last two weeks I have been living in Heaven; but the God upon whose right hand I sat, has transformed himself into a fiend, and has hurled me down from my Paradise into a Hell more fearful than ever the wildest curses of a demon portrayed! All my life, I have guarded my lightest word and thought, that I might keep myself pure; and for what? Only to be linked at last to a man who has reveled in the breath of the most degraded female reptiles, and helped to sink them lower than they already were!"

"If you were not a crazy simpleton, you'd be thankful you'd done so well. I never seduced any young girl, like lots of men have. I went to women who were already bad, and paid them like a man."

"If I had given my body up to any foul vile tramps, whose names I did not even know, would you care to inquire whether I had led astray any young man? You are also a seducer, for you sunk every one of those women lower than she already was; you put one more step between her and the purity from which she had fallen. You call yourself a good man, and your condemnation of the men who ran to the dance-house in Milroy City, helped to blind and deceive and win me. But how can you hold up your head when you are demanding that a set of creatures shall give up home life, purity, good name, and heaven at last, simply to cool your passions?"

"Gessia, I know that lots of those women are brought



there by deception; but many of them are of themselves bad, and would choose that life of themselves."

"Perhaps they would. What satisfaction then does it give you to boast that you have selected voluntary criminals to receive your dearest embraces?"

"Gessia, you haven't a particle of reason; you're just a woman out and out!"

"And supposing the woman to be willingly vile," she went on, "she is even then better than you, for she sins for bread, while you sin only for lust."

"Do you mean to tell me that I'm worse than a strumpet?" he hissed.

"Would you take up a piece of fruit that had been mouthed, fingered, and eaten of by every vile, filthy man; caress it, eat of it, and go away with self-respect, simply because you had paid your filthy gold for the privilege?"

"Oh, Gessia! you—must—allow—a little. A man is weak that way. He can't stand to have temptation brought right before him, and then be strong enough to resist."

"Did those women hunt you up and tempt you, or did you hunt them up and tempt them with money?"

"Oh, *Gessia!*"

"Tell me, please. You began the story without me asking for it; but now I insist that it shall all be told."

"Oh, I went to the house of course. But I was led into it. Ike Ransom coaxed me, d—n him."

"Ah; you were led into it. A while ago you told me that you could not help it. That men could not control themselves. It seems to me you are tangling up your statements a little. And there is another thing, John, you said awhile ago that such houses were necessary; now that you have admitted that your attendance there was not of your own judgment, I ask if you still think them necessary?"

"Yes," said John, in a loud, defiant tone, as if at last he were sure of tenable ground. "They are a protection to decent women. Lots of men are so bad that no woman would be safe from violence if there were not such houses where they could go and cool their passions!"

"And how did they become so bad? Were they not once pure? Can you imagine the first false step of any man to be an outrage upon a helpless woman? No; it is only because such houses exist, that such passions exist. It is only because a man has fostered and trained his evil



nature at such vile dens, that he becomes a creature who despises purity and scoffs at the rights of virtue."

John began sulkily to pull off his boots; neither his face nor his manner was so jubilant as when he began to tell his story. He felt himself a fearfully abused man. Any woman ought to be proud of him, but here was his wife roundly upbraiding him—even him—whose moderation was so exemplary!

"If your passions were so fierce, was there not marriage to be resorted to?" persisted Gessia.

"A man is not always ready to marry."

"And because he is not, some woman must receive shame and social ostracism."

"Well Gessia, you can't reason. There isn't a bit of charity or generosity about you."

"Is it reason to submit myself to a man who boasts his shame? Is it charity to forgive that which links me with crime and perpetuates the shame of my sister woman? Is it generosity to forgive in one who is stronger than I, a crime for which I would always loathe myself?"

John threw his boots violently into a corner.

"Are you going to bed?" continued Gessia.

"Yes, I am; I came home here, tired out, and worrying about that fuss, and expected cheerfulness and consolation, and not such brawling as this."

"As long as I believed myself your wife, I gave you all the cheer and comfort you could ask; but now, I say, if you want comfort, go to your *wife*."

"Who is my wife, if you are not?"

"The first woman whom you embraced is your wife, and no other can be while she lives; marriage consists in the willingness of two people to live together; the ceremony is only the sanction of the law. I have the honor to come in fifth; and though yourself and the law will doubtless consider me your wife, I well know better—I am only your bond-woman."

"Maybe you'd rather I'd have kept it from you. Lied about it."

"I should never have asked you—I trusted you too wholly. If it was told, it should have been done before marriage; and then if the conditions did not suit me, I could have avoided them. But what good can come of your dragging your bygone filth into my presence now, when avoiding it is impossible? As long as you were not



honest enough to tell me before marriage, I had rather you had kept it to yourself. Put yourself in my place, and imagine yourself tied to the leavings of the Nolan boys, and a few more like them, and then picture your happiness."

"Well, it's done now, and I can't help it;" snapped the complacent John, as he stalked into the bed-room and slammed the door. He was very angry, and if it had been any one but a woman who was talking so, he would have made short work of the argument; but of course he would not be rude to a woman; he believed that men ought to be good to women, even if they were cranky; he supposed all women were more or less cranky. But the idea of Gessia thinking she knew what she wanted! Almost a child, as far as experience went—did not know a thing about the world—the idea of her thinking she knew what was best for her! Why, did not all the books he had read tell about some wild young man, who had first thought of giving up his evil ways because he fell in love with some beautiful girl, who was pure as snow? And did not he give up the said evil ways, and marry the girl, in spite of six or eight decent, but slow young men, who were courting her? and did not they two always live afterward as happy as two doves in a cote? And did not the newspapers all warmly commend the action of a certain Princess of Germany, because she returned to a false, licentious husband, and tried to win his love? And did not the people all say that a woman that knew the world, would look over all the little scrapes a man had been in before he was married, and a reasonable number afterward? And did not Ike Ransom say that a sensible woman would think more of a man who had relieved himself than of one who was too much of a milk-sop to do so? The idea now of Gessia presuming to set herself square against the books, and the newspapers, and the people, and Ike Ransom, and talk as she did! He actually laughed at her silliness in spite of his anger. He would not be rude to her, though; he would be patient—he had already been very patient—and since her silliness was the result of ignorance of the great, generous world, he would continue to be patient; and he fell into a deep, heavy sleep.

Gessia sank into a chair before the fire, and tried to read its blaze. But she was too weary. She had exhausted her strength in fighting a useless battle for a lost cause.



What mattered now that her argument had been strong, and the right upon her side? The jewel she had loved and fostered had long ago been tarnished, and where there had been love and confidence, there was now only disgust and despair. She was too weary to direct her thoughts, so they assaulted her defenseless state with their most hideous aspects to the front. Her day dream arose before her, but its memory was fearful; the future life which had been wont to look so fair became a barren and desolate plain, where gloomy clouds lowered eternally; and upon this plain the dream-children which she had fondled and nursed, contorted themselves in fearful and loathsome crimes, while far at the edge of the plain, fleeing like affrighted phantoms from the devils which pursued behind, shrieked and hurried away all the hopes she had been years in building. When our cherished idol turns to base clay and crumbles at our touch, leaving its grime upon our hands, tears fail us; there is only wonder, horror, and despair. We feel that all the confidence we have reposed in our fellow creatures is misplaced—trust becomes agony, and love becomes mockery and hate.

And as bitter thoughts arose unbidden and wildly beat against her, there came before her the memory of a story which her grandfather had told her in the long ago. It was that of an aged Indian, who upon journeying into a strange land, saw upon a high mountain something which in the sunlight shone bright and resplendent; he imagined it to be the wampum of the Manitou, which cures all diseases and brings back youth. He climbed long and wearily over rocks that bruised his feet, and over thorns that tore his flesh; nor lost hope when the blood oozed from his moccasins, and the sweat stood in beads upon his brow. And when at last, with briar-torn flesh and aching limbs he stood at the goal, he found it was only mica, whose false glitter had lured him to this useless toil. And so, miles away from his people, weary, footsore, and broken, with only his blasted hope for a pillow, he lay down before the alluring destroyer, and died. Gessia felt that her soul had fought just such a battle with the thorns and rocks of the world, only to die at last before the false glitter of a heartless deceiver.

But do the wheels of life stop rolling? do the remorseless, unpitying hours stop recording the march of time, because our souls die within us? Gessia sat by the dying



fire until its embers were only ashes. Thought had died within her, and there was left only dullness, weariness, and the memory of a death-blow. But she was aroused by the indignant voice of her husband. John had awakened from his heavy sleep, and found that she was not beside him. He wondered to what fearful extent her silliness would lead her—sitting there in the cold just because he had done what all manly men did! How he was disappointed in her; he had thought that if any one were cheerful and sensible, that she was so; he had expected a little misunderstanding over this matter, to be sure, but not such foolishness as this. How gay and bright she had always seemed! And now, after all his care in choosing, it looked as if he were to be bothered with a cranky wife. He must stop this nonsense. He called out indignantly and commanded her to come to bed. Gessia started. Was it true, after all? Must she go back to the old life, that had all turned to bitterness and shame? Back to the love, always to be associated with the memory of crime, and yield her lips to a kiss that was pollution? It *was* true. Her husband had law, society, and custom on his side. There was no help, save the disgrace of what the world would call a causeless flight or the awfulness of self-destruction. She arose, and leaned her head against the mantel-piece. Was self-destruction so terrible, after all? To be sure she had always despised those who resorted to suicide because they were not brave enough to endure the continued defeats of life; but that was before she had tasted the bitterness of those defeats; that was when life was joyous and fair. She fingered her husband's pocket-knife which lay upon the mantel-piece;—but that would not be a fitting departure for such a tortured soul—she would die too quickly—there would be nothing in the pangs of dissolution to drown her shame and make her forget the phantoms that hissed in her ears. No; it would be no expression of her suffering—she would run and get the lamp, all lighted as it was; she would dash it against her head until it broke and saturated her clothes with oil; her writhing, tortured soul should go out through flame and smoke; perhaps the fangs of such a death would strike deep enough to kill the stings of mental anguish, which might otherwise keep watch over her dying moments; she thought of her girlish vows that she would not live with a stained man—of her long array of



dead hopes—of the laughter and mockery of the world if she should fly—and again she raised her eyes to the lamp. But slowly returned that hatred of the weakness that prompts self-destruction. Must she, who had always deplored that weakness in others, turn at the first blow of the unfeeling world, and all against the dictates of nature, set her crushed spirit free? Had not slaves and captives borne with their woe until God had set them at liberty? And should she be less firm than these? She, who was both a slave and a captive? Ah, yes, she was both a slave and a captive; for her wedding-ring had become a shackle, and her marriage-certificate a committal to a life prison. She gave a quick, sharp cry, like some creature in pain, and began to disrobe.

How unwise Gessia was to mourn so over the death of her foolish little hope. But ah, our hopes are our children, and no matter what their weaknesses, we weep when we see them fade and die. We have given them birth; we have cherished and nourished them; we have loved them because they are ours. Others cannot be expected to feel towards them as we do. The author once attended the funeral of a young man to whom nature had denied reason and intelligence. For twenty years he had been a burden to his family. Death claimed him. The neighbors said it was a blessing for him to die—he would no longer trouble his friends. But not so his old gray-haired mother; she had borne him, had nursed him, and for twenty years had been accustomed to his incessant demands upon her time. He was hers, and she had lost him. She refused to be comforted. Her friends and her bright, intelligent children gathered around her and preached resignation and calm. The mother finally schooled herself into a sort of outward quietude that endured until the minister was concluding the funeral services. Then her self-control gave way. She threw up her wrinkled hands, and cast off her black shawl, and with her gray hair dishevelled and streaming behind her, she rushed forward and fell upon the coffin, while the vaulted roof of the church resounded with her shrieks.

It was so with Gessia. She had nourished a foolish hope—one that the great world scorned, and ridiculed, and despised. But it was hers; she had cherished it and believed in it. If it had lived, she would have been happy, for she was accustomed to its peculiarities. But it



was dead; and although her husband would have had her believe that it was best so, she found it impossible to be resigned.

When we see a creature slowly dying a death of torture, which we are powerless to avert, we would gladly go away, to escape seeing its writhings and hearing its groans. For the memory of its contortions will visit us at night, invade our dreams, and its death-cries will sound often and fearfully in our ears. But perhaps if we stay and listen, we may learn. If it be true that sorrow and suffering are more often the result of ignorance than of intention, this dying creature may let fall words that will cause us to shun the path which led it to despair and death.

When John awoke in the morning, Gessia was lying awake, looking straight ahead of her, still and pale. John feared that she was "mad" yet. This would never do; they were to have fine times in life, and lots of pleasure; and if Gessia kept on like this, all the happiness would be spoiled. He put up his hand and pressed her white forehead.

"Mad at me yet?" he asked playfully.

"John," she said quietly; "I dreamed last night that I stood in a dark gallery which admitted of no escape, save in one direction; that was at the end of the long gallery, and there was a deep, fresh-dug pit. There was just enough light in the gallery to show me that it was utterly barren and desolate."

"Oh, Gessia!" he said in a vexed tone as he gave her a little shake; "be sensible now. The past is the past, and we'd be foolish to let that little matter spoil our life. Now be cheerful; I'm going to be, and I'll look over all you said last night, and you said a good deal, too. Now cheer up. I'd like to have my breakfast as soon as possible; I want to go up the creek and get a hand to clear out the bottom pasture."

Upon arising, Gessia felt a new trouble; her head ached, and she trembled with a nauseating sickness. She did not understand this; but in spite of it breakfast must be cooked, the rooms be swept, the milk must be skimmed, and the dusting must be done. How gleefully she had danced and sang through this routine yesterday; but how heavy and wearisome it was now! When John came in from his feeding, and as he always did, took her up in



his arms and danced about the stove with her, she felt as if she could strike him. His arms were hateful to her; when he placed her on her feet, she only groaned.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"I'm sick. Let me alone." John sat down and whistled. Strange, women couldn't behave themselves; but then even if she were unreasonable and peevish, he would be kind and indulgent. So he ate a hearty breakfast, praised the biscuits, and when the meal was over went away whistling. Before he went, however, he took occasion to joke his wife concerning the probable cause of her sickness, thinking, perhaps, that this was a good way to lighten her spirits.

Days and weeks dragged on. The meals were cooked and the household duties were performed in some mechanical way. Gessia called all her fortitude to her aid; she tried to reason that other women had to bear worse; John said that many men committed such faults during marriage, and she might rest assured that he had no such intention. But this reasoning brought small comfort; was it any worse to sin during marriage than it was to drag old sins into marriage? John's chief conversation now, was to tell her what brutes other men made of themselves, and how continent he was by comparison. But it was only weariness to her; it diminished her respect for other men, and gave her no more for her husband; what was the moral difference between him who had stolen one dollar and him who had stolen a hundred? why should the one upbraid the other? She grew to hate the amusements she had formerly loved—the books that had once been dear, because they reminded her of happier times. She attended a ball in the neighborhood and stooped to coquetry with Ed. Holcomb; why should she not? what was there to be so good for now? John, however, was not pleased with the flirtation; like most gentlemen who reserve a little license for themselves, he was very particular about his wife; and in support of this watchful care, he enlivened the road home with a good scolding. Gessia, perhaps from feeling that she had nothing to lose, was quite independent.

"Why do you object to my talking a little too much to Ed. Holcomb?" she asked after John had finished his little oration.

"Because he's a low-down, dog, and not fit for you to notice."



"Is he any worse than the quartet of women you boasted of embracing?"

"Oh, well, I see you will be simpleton. You are bound to bring that up to everything I say. You think I'm an awful bad man; but why don't you stop and think how bad some women are. I've known some women with good kind husbands to play off on them—even run off with other men, and leave their homes and children."

"Yes, and John, I never understood that till you told me what you did. I used to wonder why women would leave their homes and husbands for a life of shame, but now I understand. Their husbands, like mine, saw fit to boast to them of filthy crimes which they had committed, and they very naturally thought they ought to follow such bright examples. I tell you, John, no man can complain if his wife follows the example he sets her. Your example has licensed me, and if I see fit to call in Ed. Holcomb, or the vilest tramp, and allow him to usurp your dearest rights, you have no right to say a word."

"If you dared do such a thing—"

"You need not fear; for my own sake—not for yours, for you have forfeited all claims to my honor—but for my own sake, I will sink no deeper into shame than I now am. I will not ruin myself for any man's sins."

"You are perfectly foolish, Gessia, to talk about what I've done licensing you. If it had been done inside of marriage, you might talk."

"Inside of marriage indeed? How am I to judge of your future save by your past? And if I were impure, how much difference would it make to you whether I promised future continence as reparation for past crimes and deception?"

"Why do you say deception?"

"Because you *did* deceive me; I asked you what you thought of such men as the Nolan boys, and tried to get you to talk; and you made me believe you were pure, and then changed the subject."

"And I did just right; it was not a fit subject for you to talk to me on."

"It was far fitter for you to tell me of your sins then, than after marriage, when opposition would be useless."

"O, well, Gessia, it's no use to keep harping. We'll just make the matter worse. Let's keep still if we can't find something else to talk about."



"You seemed glad enough to talk about it once. A subject like that is slow to die ; marriage is too delicate a relation to sustain the shock of crime and deceit. I am hopelessly wronged, still, like you, I can see no good to be found talking it over. I do not speak of it because my judgment bids me, but because the woe it causes voluntarily speaks."

After this conversation there was silence between them upon the subject for some time. Gessia's sickness increased, and her gloom became more enduring and settled. She knew the cause of her sickness now, but what consolation was that? what she had once longed for she now dreaded. John grew impatient at her lack of interest in things, and at her silence and gloom. He went around and laid the case before that smooth-spoken, successful man of the world, Ike Ransom. Ike had been the one to lead him into licentious ways, and to insist that a sensible woman would love more truly a man who had been in several scrapes with women. John remembered that he had never been very proud of his youthful license, and he had worried some in secret over this, for fear he might not be quite manly. Ike Ransom had said that no manly man would stand back from enjoying his rights. Of course he had kept his misgivings a profound secret, and had talked to his friends of the necessity of indulgence, quite as fluently as he had to Gessia. Now he determined to tell Ike that the system did not seem to be working to perfection, and get him to prescribe a remedy. He detailed his troubles in full. Ike smoked on in silence for a time, then snatched his pipe out of his mouth and vehemently exclaimed :

"Well, John, your wife is a Tartar, sure. Of course you can do as you please, but I tell you, if she was my wife she'd learn to keep her mouth shut on such subjects."

"But Ike, she's a good woman—all but that."

"Can't help it if she is," said Ike warming up. "She's out of her place when she undertakes to meddle with a man's rights. She's fanatical, and if she belonged to me I'd keep her still."

"What would you do, Ike? I never thought of it before, but somehow it seems as if everything that's said brings it up, and when it isn't being talked about, she's going around looking like a corpse. I'd rather she'd talk, than look so."

"John, you haven't a particle of spunk where a woman



is concerned. Now a woman's just an overgrown child—has to be bossed just the same. Now if she was my wife, I'd just tell her out and out that she'd got to behave herself, or by the everlastin', I'd make her wish she had. I've joined the church and I s'pose I oughtn't to swear, but by G—d, if there's anything in this world that makes me want to cuss a blue streak, it's to see a woman trying to meddle with what's none of her business. A man is one thing and a woman is another, and if she isn't made to know her place, there's no telling what will become of her."

Of course Ike told Ida Jane, and of course Ida Jane told all the neighbors, that Gessia Solomon was worrying her life out because John used to run with bad women so much; and thus the matter was infinitely helped along. It is always an excellent idea for neighbors to be initiated into a family difficulty—the matter is then certain of being made the most of.

John resolved to take Ike's advice; of course Ike knew; he was authority on such subjects. So one afternoon, after he had tried in vain to interest his wife in a conversation such as had been common during that brief fortnight of early wedded life, he flashed out:

"Gessia, if you don't behave yourself, I'll get to acting hateful too!"

"What have I been doing?" she wailed.

"Why, you act just as hateful as you can; you just go around here like a ghost, and don't talk or try to make things pleasant at all."

"I can't talk—for thinking."

"I'ts because you are a simpleton. And I tell you that there's been enough of this nonsense, and if you don't behave yourself, why, I'll not try to behave myself."

Gessia sat and sobbed. Her husband might do dreadful things. Was it not better after all to make the best of it? Anything would be better than the life she was now leading.

"I want to know what you are going to do," said John, impatient at her delay.

"Oh, I'll try! I'll try!" she sobbed.

"Well, I think it's time. Now come here and sit on my knee, and kiss me, like you used to." She went; she dropped upon his knee and pressed her tear-wet face to his lips, while sobs shook her form. Tears came into



John's eyes also—tears of joy to think that after all she was going to be sensible. Presently her sobs ceased, and she sat silent in his arms. But if her husband could have seen the loathing in the conquered heart, he would have felt but little joy in his triumph.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### A MEETING WITH HETTY ANN BALES.

GESSIA firmly resolved to submit; of course there could be no happiness for her, but duty still remained; and for that duty and its faithful performance, she would bravely struggle. So as the days wore on she smiled, but her smiles were sadder than tears; she laughed, but her laugh sometimes ended in a sob. She sang, but even John could hear the wail of despair which arose between the lines. He began to fear that Ike's plan wouldn't be a success so far as Gessia was concerned; Gessia evidently wasn't the sensible woman that Ike had described. One evening, about a month after the introduction of Ike's plan, John was trying as usual to bring back the old state of affairs, which he now remembered to have been very pleasant. But things did not seem to work well. Gessia laughed when he desired her to, but he did not like the choking noise in her throat which followed the laughter. He got out of patience, and favored her with the information that people did not get married to act hateful.

"Then why did you act hateful?" she said as she began to hide her face.

"Now take that handkerchief away from your face. I didn't act hateful. It was right for you to know, and if you had any judgment you'd see it."

"Then you ought to have told me before marriage; but that you would never have done; you knew well enough that I'd never marry you if you let me know."

"Oh, yes, I suppose you would have been silly enough to refuse me; you are a smart woman about some things, Gessia, but on that one subject you are a perfect fanatic. If I had not married you, it's as likely as not, being as



hard to suit as you are, that you'd have been an old maid."

"An old maid!" said Gessia springing up, "I wish to God that I were an old maid! I'd have self-respect, if nothing more. I would not then be polluted by the embrace of a man who has assisted in the degradation of my sex. I'd teach music, I'd teach school, I'd work in a kitchen, I'd do anything to earn an honest living. I'd save my money, I'd study nature, I'd travel and see the world."

"You'd do wonders. I thought you claimed it was a woman's first duty to raise a family of fine children. You're changing your mind."

"Yes, I am changing. I did want children when I believed my husband worthy to father them. But what right have I to bring children into the world who are disgraced before they are born? Why should I wish for a son to turn some woman's life to Hell, or for a daughter to suffer as I am suffering?"

"Jealous people always suffer."

"I am not jealous. I tell you solemnly, that those women who sinned for bread are more tolerable to me, then you, who sinned only for lust. It is not jealousy; it is moral horror. Why could you not have married, if a woman was necessary to you? What excuse have you, if, as you tell me, you could have married any girl in this neighborhood?"

Of course Gessia was a point-blank fool; still John was greatly surprised to see that she had so much argument on her side; it was not for the lack of argument though, he told himself, that his defence was weak. "If I could talk like you, Gessia," he said, "I could defend myself better."

"If you had the eloquence of Demosthenes you could not make crime tolerable to me. You might, indeed, ornament your sentences with rhetoric and dress your themes with the flowers of language; but argument, you could not produce. There is not one jot of argument upon the side of any public wrong, or in favor of any outrage; truth and justice and virtue in action, and liberty and equality, whether of race or sex, have all the argument on their side; and the believer in an unjust cause never knows its weakness until he tries to defend it."

"I know one thing, though," he said sulkily; "if I



had married any girl in this neighborhood, she wouldn't have made so much fuss about such a little thing."

"It may be as you say. I believe that most women have been so schooled to defeat, so driven to believe that submission to shame is the only door to marriage, that many of them would keep silence after hearing their husbands confess vileness. It is as natural for a woman to desire a husband as it is for a man to desire a wife. More than this, the world passes such harsh judgment upon the woman who does not marry, that, aside from her natural inclination, she is driven into marriage. The world makes her life outside of marriage so hard, that, as you say, many will submit in silence to the outrageous wrongs of our marital system. And when she has submitted, she will find a new trouble—her husband knowing that he would not give his hand to an impure companion, looks upon her as his inferior because she does so, and secretly despises her for her servility. I tell you, John, as I have a woman's soul, it is impossible for a woman not to desire her husband's purity; and no amount of fortitude can steel her against suffering because of its loss, however well it may serve to hide that suffering from the general eye. Why is it natural for you to want to be first with me, and unnatural for me to want to be first with you? O, a pure marriage would be a marriage indeed! What need we care for the frowns of fortune or the reverses of fate, if we knew we owned each other? But now, what is there in the future? Crops will fail, business reverses will come, and neighbors will slander and quarrel; there will be children born in suffering, and some of these will sicken and die, there will be dreary watches besides fading forms in the gloomy night; and throughout all this, there will be no pure, unsullied love to cheer. Of all the human beings on earth, man can depend upon but one to be his friend through a lifetime of sorrow and trouble. That one is his wife; and if she fail him, he stands alone. Creatures will suffer endless privation, sorrow, and pain for those whom they love; but when the loved one has made a mockery of affection, the merest accident becomes a fearful calamity, and even intended pleasure turns to bitterness. Life, wreathed with all possible love and purity, would still be annoyed by the thousand vexations which the world offers; but when the weight of disgrace is added,



the burdens become too many and too heavy to be borne."

"I see, Gessia, that you are determined to look on the dark side of things."

"Is there any bright side to disgrace? Think over what you have done; picture to yourself the poor, shamed, painted, scorned wretches you have lowered; think how, with all your splendid gifts, you have robbed yourself of the affection and trust of your dearest friend. Put your shame in your best language, and then tell me what you find to give me consolation, or you self-respect."

"Well, Gessia, if it is as bad as you say, it is I who ought to suffer, and not you."

"I must always be the great sufferer. I have been deceived into giving my hand where I would never have given it. I am linked to a man for whom I must always blush, and lodged in a home made hideous with the spectres of lost, sinking wretches. It is impossible that you should feel about this as I do. The conscience that has been blunted by contact with sin loses its ability to shrink at horror. Human bones can better sustain a fall from a precipice, than the human conscience can sustain a fall from virtue."

"Well, we're foolish to jangle all the time, and if we don't quit it, we'll always be miserable. Even if I have done a little wrong, I don't see why I should be punished always for it."

"If I had done your offense, my punishment would have ostracized me from society during life, and my grave would have been a nameless one. My name would have been spoken by men only to be coupled with foul jests, and respectable people would have turned aside in the street to keep their clothes from touching mine. And yet"—she went on as she stretched out her hands—"and yet every vile, cruel, heartless, drunken, besotted man we see loafing and indulging in obscene jokes upon the streets, has a place in society. Whenever he sees fit to wash himself, and change his clothes, and announce that he has finished sowing his wild oats, society is ready to open its arms to him; and some woman who has fed on the pernicious ideas of the day is ready to be his wife, rather than fail of being a wife at all. Oh, there is nothing for us but injustice, inequality and shame!"

"Oh, well, Gessia, you won't see reason and you won't



see the difference between a man and a woman," snarled John, as he stalked off to bed.

If a phrenologist had presumed to hunt for prominences upon John's head he would probably have discovered a bump of amazing size upon the region of faith; he believed that all things were bound to turn out well with him; he was certain that so fine a fellow could not meet with disaster. Before he had committed his youthful indiscretions, he had doubted their justice and cleanliness; but of course it would be all right—his luck was so excellent. When he married Gessia, with a full knowledge of her deep moral convictions, and held her in ignorance of his lapses until she was bound, he had felt some doubt about his right to do so; but of course it would turn out all right. Even now, as he left the room after this talk, he was not discouraged—it would all come out right—things always came out right for him. Gessia was sick now; when the little baby came she would get over her nonsense; the baby would cheer them both, he would buy Gessia a new silk dress, and all would be one long era of happiness, love, and content. The earthquake was to gobble up some one else.

As the young wife toiled away one bright June morning at her dishwashing, baking, and churning, the burden upon her soul seemed heavier than usual; the work was far too heavy for her enfeebled hands and she did not want a girl in the house to read the misery in her every step and glance. There were John and two hired men to cook for, and all the five rooms of the house to keep neat and clean; all the milk to skim, the cream to churn, and the mending to do. But it was not the work that made her so weary; "O, I could gladly bear it all; the work and the sickness and all, if only he was worth suffering for; but now there is nothing left but despair." As she made this mental comment she heard a knock; she was glad of it; perhaps it was some one she could talk to, and forget for a time at least, her load of sorrow. It was old Hetty Ann Bales, whose husband was such a good-for-nothing brute, according to John's story, who entered the door. Gessia brought forward the best rocker.

"Good mornin', Miss Solomon," said Hetty Ann, as soon as she could cease groaning from the heat. "I saw you to meetin' Sunday, lookin' so pale and white like, that I thought I'd jest come over and bring ye a little



mite of double tansy. It'll be mighty good to make a mite of tea of and drink for headaches, and it won't hurt ye a bit—it ain't like single tansy."

"Thank you, Mrs. Bales; take this fan."

"Yes'm; thanke; you and John is fixed up mighty nice for keepin' house; lots better nor me and Josiah was when we started up."

"But perhaps we are no happier than you were, Mrs. Bales; hearts have more to do with making homes than houses and furniture do."

"Well, I *was* happy for a while; that's the truth; but it didn' last. Nothin' lasts in this world but taxes and bad reputations and trouble." A fire which had long been dormant flashed in the speaker's dull gray eyes; a sudden thought that there might be a similarity in their crosses arose in Gessia's mind. To speak upon such a topic would be very unwise, but what was the use of wisdom now? Why need she protect the good name of a husband who unblushingly boasted his shame? She moved her chair nearer to the visitor's, and said:

"Do you believe Mrs. Bales that every woman we see bears some heavy sorrow, which perhaps shows in a care-worn face, or which is hidden under a forced deceitful smile?"

"Why, I never 'lowed as you had any secret trouble; seein' as you've got things so nice around you, and such a good, kind husband, as every body spoke so well on."

We might bear with our tyrants if others were silent concerning them; we might even defend them if others maligned, because they are "our" tyrants; but when others praise them, we lose strength, discretion, self control and will-power. We must expose them, let that exposure cost what it will. Gessia's judgment deserted her; in the depths of physical suffering, with the stings of shame, injustice, and tyranny piercing to her very soul, she buried her face in her hands and sobbed aloud.

"Law now, Miss Solomon, what be the matter? any of the home folks sick, or what is it?"

"Oh, nothing—only I'm a fool."

"Law now, John ain't mean to ye, is he?"

Gessia struggled valiantly for an instant; then let go the tight rein she had been holding upon her unruly tongue.



"He's a brute! A tyrant! A perfect devil!" she sobbed.

"Well, well! *Now!* I wouldn't a believed it. Well I 'low he didn't do you like Josiah did me, anyhow. I used to think Josiah was all them things you said, but law, the neighbors all told me what a good, kind husband I'd got."

"And how did he serve you?"

"Well, I've kept my mouth shet so fur, and if you ain't offended, Miss Solomon, I won't give up now, I haint borne my troubles as well as some, but I've kinder worried along under 'em somehow. Troubles is like children—they're easier to manage when they're kept at home."

Gessia did not speak; she only sobbed long and sorrowfully.

"If there's any way I can help you, Miss Solomon, let me know how, and I'll do it gladly;" said Mrs. Bales as she drew her snuff-box out of her pocket.

"Oh, well! What do you do with your troubles when they get so heavy you can't possibly carry them?"

"Well, it's 'cordin' to what they air. If you think it ain't best to tell, Miss Solomon, don't you do it; but if you think I can help you any, why, out with it. It ain't best to tell troubles, I know, but then may be I can help you."

"You won't tell any one?"

"I've kept still about my own troubles nigh unto thirty years, and onless your trials is like mine, I'll keep still yet. But if we've been served alike, I'll tell you, and then arter that we'd both better keep still, for this is a powerful bad neighborhood to talk."

"Well, Oh—Oh—it's bad women, Mrs. Bales!"

Mrs. Bales laid her snuff-box on the window-sill and raised her heavy hands above her head. "You don't mean to tell me," she said, "that he's been tellin' in your ears that he's been runnin' after them nasty women down at the dance-house in Milroy City?"

"Not in Milroy City, Mrs. Bales; he takes great credit to himself that he never bothered them so near home. The ones he visited, he said, were away off from here."

"Well, I don't see why he need take credit for not goin' here, if he was goin' to carry the news here, and stuff it down your throat. I don't see how the place where a mean thing's done, helps it out any. Well, well! The world do beat all. Now I never seed but one or two



men that I had as much faith in that way, as I had in John; why if you hadn't told me that John told you himself, I never would a believed it from anybody. But law, don't distress yourself with cryin'; calm down if you're goin' to talk. He ain't worth one of them tears. I'm sorry for such a pretty, bright critter; but law, you ain't the first. It's a mighty old story."

And then with tears and sobs came Gessia's recital; she told it all—all the shame, the taunts, the threats, the hopeless wrangling and the fading, receding love. Her auditor sat quietly looking out of the door, her hands clasped on her knees and her face unmoved.

"Oh, Mrs. Bales, I thought you'd be sorry for me," wailed Gessia, wringing her tear-wet hands.

"Sorry for ye? Ain't I?" said the old woman with a long, heavy sigh. "Ain't I a living my bridehood over again in yours? Josiah acted jest for the world like you say. Taunted me for years about him runnin' with other women, and ain't done tauntin' me yet, when he gits any time off from tellin' smutty jokes down at the saloon."

"Oh, how have you endured it? How have you lived so long? It's killing *me*."

"Listen to me a spell. I never was as bright and purty as you, and never had so much larnin'; but I was counted onusual in the part of Tennessee I lived in. I'd read what books I could git hold of, and I thought, like you, that it was all wrong for a man to be histed up on a pole, and toted round, for doin' the same thing that a woman gits kicked for. But most people laughed at me, and said I'd surely git ketched up with a onusual bad husband that way. But I didn't believe 'em, and I went on till I fell in love with Josiah and married him. I 'low no woman ever had more faith in a man than I had in him, and I was powerful happy and ambitious to get along. I put in a big garden and set three hens on goose eggs, and commenced to calkilate how soon we'd be able to buy a place. Josiah's father and mine was both slaveholders in a small way, but they hadn't any niggers to spare for us, only to let us have one to help a day or two once in a while. But I didn't care. I was willin' to work, and I 'low I was one of the happiest women that ever lived, up to the time we'd been married three weeks. And then one day Josiah came home and commenced to tell me about a girl in the neighborhood turnin' out bad, and I tuck up for



her, and undertuck to say she wasn't any worse than the men that run with her. Then he went on and defended the men, and told me that he'd been intimate with more than a dozen women before he'd ever seen me. Says I, 'Josiah, you're jest a foolin' me.' 'No I ain't,' says he. Then I jest set down in the garden where I'd been hoein' and commenced to cry. I told him that if it was so, that I didn't want to hear it; but he jest went on, and kept tellin' me, and laughed at my cryin', and said that when I got older I wouldn't be sech a fool. Oh, I swear I'd a left him then and there, but I'd been dreadful sick for three mornin's hand runnin' and I was afraid I wasn't fit to depend on myself and earn my own livin'. I knew it wa'n't no use to go back to father, for he thought a grass-widder was worse 'n a snake or a runaway nigger. Don't take it so hard dear; you're only one in a thousand."

"Oh, do all women have to endure such shame? Is there no hope? Even the negro, when he tried to escape, found hands stretched out to guide and help him. But the wife who leaves a merciless tyrant is spurned on every hand. Society never will take the brand off of her name. I was just like you say—so glad, so happy, so ambitious. Oh, what shall I do?"

"Do like other women; kinder forget."

"Oh, I cannot! I cannot! Every day it comes upon me with greater force that my husband is soiled, and his name stained—that I am not the first—that he is not all mine—that he has made a mockery of the purest relations of life. And yet if he knew of the slightest speck on my good name, he would turn me out of his house at midnight, though the wind were shrieking and the snow piling mountain high. He even lectures me for talking and dancing with other men, and says that I will get my name up as a flirt. Oh, tell me what I shall do?"

"Well, kinder quiet down, and do the best you can. I know I never did a bit of good after Josiah told me. After I knowed that, I jest let my garden go and didn't half tend to my hens. My goslings all got drowned 'cause I was too slow getting 'em in out of a storm, and my garden went to rack, I jest set round the house, or gossipped with the neighbors, I tuck to makin' my coffee a deal stronger, and then I got to dippin' snuff, and smoking ter-backer. I know that Josiah has seed the difference many a time, and I don't care. He had a big fuss with a neigh-



bor soon after, and the neighbor put up two niggers to beat him. Josiah came pretty near gittin' killed up, and was jest able to drag himself home. I dressed his wounds and put salve on 'em, but I didn't try to put no salve on his feelin's. I didn't kiss him and go on over him, and he didn't like that. 'Hetty Ann,' he says, 'you ain't sorry for me.' 'Well,' says I, 'Josiah, you've enlisted too many women in your cause to git much sympathy from any one of 'em; go to the first one you had; she's yer proper wife, and the proper one to sympathize with you.' Says he, 'You're selfish, Hetty Ann, you don't care for nobody but yourself.' Says I, 'Maybe I be selfish, Josiah, but then I never was selfish enough to appropriate no ten or a dozen men to myself. I never wanted but one.' Well, we kinder got along somehow. My baby came; it was a fine boy, but I didn't take much comfort in it; then I had a little gall; and before she was a year old they both tuck the fever and died. Well, they kept on comin' till I'd had six, and they kept on dyin' of one thing and another, till finally they was all dead. And I didn't care much. I cried over 'em 'cause they looked so white and sweet and cold, but then I jest thought that if they died that the galls would never suffer like I was sufferin', and the boys wouldn't inflict sech sufferin' as Josiah had on me. I tell you it's a mighty comfort to think of 'em in their six little graves back there in Tennessee. I often think how the grass and moss that's growin' over 'em shuts 'em out from the sin and trouble of this world. And what you said, Miss Solomon, about there bein' people as would help the slaves off, but none to rescue the women, has got a mighty sight of truth in it. Mind you, I ain't sayin' slavery was wrong, nor I ain't sayin' it was right—it's gone, and I don't know as I'm particlar sorry, though I was raised to be used to it. But even sayin' it *was* wrong, as you folks seem to think, why even then I say, the treatment the women gits is worse. Take women that's read and studied and filled their minds and hearts with good, and when they marry they learn things that makes 'em all heart-sick. Then them as ain't married has got to be on the lookout all the time to keep from bein' insulted, or slandered, or seduced by them as calls theirselves our protectors. And when a woman has once actually gone wrong, she's worse off nor any nigger slave ever was. I'd like to have some one point out to me where's the Canada



she can go to and throw off her shackles of shame; and even if the Canada was found, I'd like to see the underground railroad that's to carry her to it. Law, if all men was like my brother Dave, that was killed at Kenesaw, there'd be some chance for the women. Says I to Dave once, for I allers know'd Dave was as straight as a string, says I, 'Dave, you ain't the one to be runnin' to the nigger quarters to stay all night, like lots of the boys round here, be you?' and says he, 'No, Hetty Ann, nor to any bad white woman's, neither,' says he; 'I'm goin' to give the woman I marry a name to be proud of.' Oh, Dave was a grand one; there wan't many such in Tennessee, nor no where else, I reckon. I remember when he was goin' to enlist he come to me, and, says he, 'Hetty Ann, I 'low the Lord holds the fortunes of war in his hands, and that he'll turn this 'un to suit hisself; but as long as the Yankees is comin' this way, I feel it's my duty to oppose 'em with my feeble strength.' So he 'listed, and I got letters from him all along till jest after Kenesaw, when I got the last one. It was stained with blood, and Dave wrote it—jest a few lines—while he was bleedin' to death from a gunshot wound in his lung. In that letter he give me his good-bye, and told me if ever I seen two Yankee doctors, whose names he give me, for me to be kind to 'em, for they'd been kind to him, and tried to save him. I hated the Yankees then, but if I'd seen them two doctors, or any one else that had done for Dave, I could a died for 'em. Oh, when I got that letter, I jest about give up; and wicked as it was, I couldn't help askin' my heart why the Yankee bullets hadn't found Josiah instead of my Dave. I tell you, Miss Solomon, if the sin of abusin' women was all on the shoulders of we Southerners there'd be mighty apt to be somethin' done. You Yankees would be up in arms in no time, a marchin' down onto us, a-layin' waste our fields, burnin' our homes, and at the point of the bayonet, forcin' us to give up our sin. Our country 'ud be full of Blue Coats, jest as it was in abolition time, a-wavin' their caps and singin' 'Glory hallelujah' and 'God is marchin' on.' The Mississippi 'ud be full of gunboats, and our fields 'ud be covered with bones, and every busted winder in Tennessee 'ud be stuffed full of blue clothes stripped off of dead Yankees; and what wasn't killed would be all ready to die for their cause, a-holdin' up their proud heads, and spreadin' out



their broad shoulders, and declarin' that they was fightin' the battles of the Lord. Law, its jest that much easier for people to see other folk's sins than 'tis for 'em to see their own.

"And then, if you Yankees was the only guilty ones, I 'low we'd git excited at the way our neighbors was doin'. We'd raise and arm I 'low as quick as we did before, and march North if we knowed we'd meet with twenty Gettysburgs on the road. We fought right peart before, and I 'low we would agin if we thought we orter. We'd fight till we'd free *your* slaves—your women slaves—and make you acknowledge that them as had been your victims should go free. You 'uns say you did a glorious work when you freed our slaves—maybe you did—as I said before, I ain't arguin' that; but I 'low that if we could march North and set your low women free from their shame, and your married ones free from knowin' that they was bein' loved and caressed second to a gang of strumpets that their husbands had before they married 'em, I 'low we'd do a gloriouiser. But, law, it's no use hopin' nor talkin' about that; one side's jest as deep in the mud as 'tother one is in the mire; and I 'low we Southerners 'll hold on to our yaller girls and our sins as tight as we did to our slaves; and that you Yankees 'll shout jest as loud for your fornication as ever you did for abolition or your country. Well, Josiah didn't do no good back there, so he up and got ready to come out here; I told him 'fore he started that I wa'n't goin' to work my eyes out to git a home started in a new country—that I didn't particlar care whether I had a home or not, so I got a bite to eat. He called me a lazy old b—and I jest told him that I couldn't well help bein' one of them things, after livin' with a dog so long; and then he got mad and cussed me awful. But I didn't care; a woman's got to say her mind once in a while or she'll go plum crazy. Well, things kept on that way. Josiah didn't do no good, and I didn't try to do nothin' but slick up the house a bit, and cook a bite to eat. And I don't 'low to. Josiah says I'll die in the poor-house, and I don't particlar care if I do."

"Oh—oh—oh!" wailed Gessia; "is there no help? Must we all give up, must we lose our enthusiasm, our ambition, and our hope, and drag our weary bodies along



to a cheerless death? Do women always submit as you have done?"

"Well, it is hard, but then after once they're tied I 'low it's the best they can do; a grass-widder is nobody, no matter if she's a saint; and if a woman undertakes to pay a man off, she allers gits the worst of it, because society's agin her. She can't take a lover, nor yet kill herself without flyin' in the face of the commandments, and losin' her hope of heaven. And that's one thing I'm goin' to hold on ter; I've allers been onhappy and wretched in this world, and I don't 'low give up my chance of happiness in another one."

"I have ceased to believe in either heaven or the justice of God," said Gessia, as she bowed her head in deep despair. "I know that my aims were once high, and my motives pure, but now without any assistance on my part, save accepting in marriage the man I loved, I find myself in a covenant with sin, and the destined mother of a child whose father has outraged life's purest ties. What can I expect of such a child? What chance will there be for it to be self-respecting, clean, and decent?"

"Well, I can't give yer much comfort, Miss Solomon, only this: hold on to the Lord, mebbe he won't disappoint us. If there's any hope at all here, it is in the young men—we women can't do nothin', 'cept jest to be careful in marryin', and stay old maids if we can't marry decently; but young men—at least some of 'em—like to be advancin'. Now I've allers had an idea that a man that ain't better nor his father, or a woman that ain't better nor her mother, don't reflect much credit on their bringin'-up. I don't see that they're anything but failures; for if people didn't improve over their parents they'd never been out of fig-leaves yet. Well, here's a chance for young men to start in and do something noble. I don't believe that American men is tyrants by nature, and I believe once git them waked up to the wrong they're doin', that nearly all of 'em would go to fightin' it. And when I git to thinkin' about that war I was talkin' about, and how brave them men was—and I can't see as one side was a whit behind the other for grit—when I think of them men marchin' up to be shot down, and torn with shells and gashed with swords—when I think of 'em wadin' creeks and swamps and dyin' in reekin' prisons, all for what they thought was right, I kinder think there's reason to hope.



I believe once git 'em thoroughly awake on this subject, and they'll all jine hands and march agin it, and fight to stamp it out harder than ever they fit for or agin' slavery. At least I hope it'll be so. If people'll 'ud make it a rule for every generation of critters to wipe out one sin, and stick right to that rule, we'd git so we could hold our heads up after awhile.

"I remember once comin' onto a wounded Yankee jest on the edge of the field at Lookout Mountain; he was jest a boy, and he looked for the world like Dave; he was bleedin' to death and I couldn't help kinder doin' what I could for him, even if he was a Yankee; but I asked him what he was down there for, a despoilin' our homes, and says he: 'Ah, madam, you're a noble woman to do what your'e doin' for me, and the Lord'll bless you for it; but then you're holdin' my fellow man in bondage, and if I had a thousand lives, I'd give 'em all up jest as cheerfully as I'm givin' up this one, to set him free.' And then I says, 'But nobody'll know it; you're off here by yerself, and the chances is that you'll never be found by yer friends.' But says he, 'What is a nameless grave, or no grave at all, to dishonor? I'd be willin' to rot here unknown to any livin' critter, if only my fellow man gits his freedom for it.' Then I broke down, and agreed to write to his folks, and I've often hoped since that him and Dave had met and clasped hands in heaven. When I think of sech men as that, I kinder believe that all they need is proper raisin' and a good wakin' up.

"Then I've often thought that if a man could jest know what a woman has to suffer, that he'd have more mercy for her. Now you take a nice, smart, sensible gal that is goin' to marry the man she loves, and I 'low she never is as happy as she is when she's dressin' for her weddin'. She feels that she's gone to enter a new life, where she'll have nothin' but love and happiness and good treatment as long as she lives. But in about a month she's gen'rly undeceived. By that time, she's goin' round with her head feelin' as big as a barrel, and with her face as white as a sheet; she's throwin' up her vittles, and has got a nasty mean taste in her mouth, that no one as ain't felt it, can even imagine about. More'n this, she gen'rly knows by this time that her husband's had more unmarried wives than ever she's had beaus, and this fact don't tend to make her vittles set no stidier on her stomach. And yet she stays on,



because she knows she has ter. She thinks all other women have to put up with the same, so she jest quiets down, and lets on she don't care, and jines a church, and puts the faith in God that she once had in her husband. She goes on havin' children and doin' for 'em, and washin' their dirty clothes; and finally she dies, and the doctor calls what she died of by some big name, when it ain't anything but disgust and a broken heart. As far as havin' children and doin' for 'em is concerned, I never minded that, if it only hadn't been for them other women. It's a woman's duty to have children—its what natur meant her for—but I think she has enough, to go through with while she's about it, without knowin' that she's raisin' 'em up for a man that's disgraced 'em all 'fore they was born.

“The churches might do somethin', if only they'd fight this thing right; but law, they'd rather fight one another, than to fight sin. I'm holdin' on to the Lord, but I don't pretend to hold on to the churches; if I did, I'd wait till they set to work at this matter. There's the Baptists givin' the Methodists Hail Columbia, and the Presbyterians sailin' into the Campbellites, and all of 'em unitin' to blow up the Catholics; and the Catholics, while they won't put a reformed woman as high as a reformed man, still they do more for bad women than any other church does—not sayin' that *they* do quite as much as they might. Then all the Christian churches club together to blow up the Mormons; and while I'm no Mormon, and don't believe in polygamy, still I've got this to say—that polygamy is a long ways better than prostitution; if a man has got to have ten or a dozen wives, let him marry 'em, and recognize 'em as his wives afore the law. Then the churches and the societies, and even the people, will find some loop-hole of escape for the men, but they can't find one for the women. The Baptists and Presbyterians consider that the men are foreordained to sin, so they look over it; the Methodists and Campbellites are so forgivin' that they soon forget about it; the Universalists are so good-hearted that they'll forgive the men anything; the Catholics will excuse the men if they confess and express penitence; and the infidels are so liberal-minded that they think it a pity to bother about it. But neither the foreordination of the Baptists and Presbyterians, nor the forgiveness of the Methodists and Campbellites and Universalists, nor



the confession of the Catholics, nor the liberality of the infidels, don't excuse the women. Every body seems to think it's his duty to give the women a kick, and he'll neglect any other duty to attend to that one.

"Says Josiah to me once, 'Hetty Ann, you haven't any business with so much sensitiveness; it jest make you suffer.' But says I, 'Yes, and people haven't any business with nerves to ache when their flesh is cut or struck or burned; and pussy-cat hasn't any business with a tail to be stepped on and hurt; but then the smartin' of the nerves may warn us when our bodies are in danger, and when a pussy-cat's tail gits stepped on, it may warn her that her body's in danger; and when some one runs agin' my moral sensitiveness, it may warn me that my heart and soul's in danger. But it's wrong for people to hurt my nerves, jest 'cause natur' give 'em to me, and it's wrong to mash a pussy-cat's tail jest 'cause she happens to have one; and it's wrong for you, Josiah Bales, to tramp on my moral sensitiveness, jest 'cause natur' give me a moral sensitiveness.' And now I must go, Miss Solomon. I've got to git a hot dinner, or Josiah 'll have another spell. Good-day. Cheer up, now, and carry yer troubles and don't let them carry you."

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE FORTUNES OF NANNIE ALLEN.

It will be remembered that Nannie Allen disappeared from the vicinity of Milroy City on the evening of Frank Hatton's wedding. Her ideas as she rode along in the handsomely decorated car were in a state of some confusion, but she distinctly knew two things: first, that she had left the old life behind for ever; and second, that she still wanted to live. She had often rode on the cars before, going from one vile town to another, to continue a life of shame, when she would have welcomed a railroad accident, even if broken timbers had held her down, while fierce flames slowly sucked her breath away. But now that she was



going to something better, she began to think how awful death would be. Hope was born, and Nannie sweetly welcomed the stranger.

Arriving at a small mining town in Nevada, she alighted from the cars, wondering within herself what she was to do. Her disguise sat uneasily upon her; she felt as if every one must know her secret. It would never do to venture changing her dress in a hotel—she would certainly be detected. She pulled her hat well down over her eyes and grasping her little bundle tightly, hurried away from the group of loungers about the depot, and started toward the foot-hills. She soon found a secluded spot—a quiet gulch—where she put on her feminine apparel, and then sitting down upon a rock, she took out needle and thread and re-trimmed her hat. She threw her discarded clothing into a deserted prospect-hole; and now, a pretty young woman without any baggage, she re-entered the town, keeping close to the foot-hills until she could enter a street. Kitchen help is always in demand in a mining town—she would hunt employment in that line. She walked quietly along until she reached a large, rough-looking house, with a sign in front of it, labelled, “Bording and Logeing.”

She walked around to the kitchen-door, and inquired of a buxom woman who was baking pies, if any help was needed.

“Yes,” said the woman, “I do need help powerful bad, but I ain’t a goin’ to say that I think you’d be much help. You look about done out now.”

“I am very tired; I have been travelling; but I am able and willing to work.”

“Got any recommends?”

“No ma’am; but if you’ll try me for a few days, I’ll do my best to make you satisfied.”

“Where’s your baggage?”

“Why—I have none.”

“How’s that?”

“Why,” said Nan, with hanging head, “I was staying with a woman. I found out that she wasn’t a good woman to be with, so I ran off and left everything—I was so anxious to get away.”

“Was she mean to you?”

“Sometimes. But please don’t make me talk about it.



She was a dreadful woman, and would have only done me harm if I'd stayed."

"Are you a good girl yourself?" asked the woman, eyeing her keenly.

"If I was not, do you think I'd be hunting work?" faltered Nan, as she burst into a fit of weeping. The woman leaned over her row of dainty pies and studied the sobbing girl. She had world-knowledge, and could read the lines of shame and dissipation in the face. She was almost certain that the girl was bad; but was it the fact that she herself had known hardship and hunger that softened her? Even if the girl was bad, she might want to do better; her heart softened and her face relaxed.

"Well I reckon you wouldn't," she said. "What's your name?"

"Kate Wilson."

"Well, Kate, jest take off that nice worsted dress, and put on that blue caliker of mine, and git to work at the dinner dishes. I haven't had time to wash 'em yet. My girl flared up and left this mornin' 'cause I wanted her to rense the glasses, and I'm most driv to death. My name's Hester Bunyan; I'm the wife of Pete Bunyan, the chief lumberer down at the mine. I ain't hard to git along with, if anybody'll try to earn their pay. This here is the washin' rag, and that, a hangin' there, is the wipin' towel."

Nan's head swam; she could indeed hardly believe that employment was so quickly found, and she was sufficiently world-wise to know that the case was an exceptional one. She almost flew into the "caliker" dress and soon the dishes were all washed, the glassware shone like diamonds, and soon the table was invitingly set for supper.

"What wages do ye expect?" asked Mrs. Bunyan, as Nan was cutting potato chips. "I give the last girl five dollars and board, but law, she wa'n't worth five cents and a kick."

"Pay me whatever I can earn," said Nan. "Of course I'd like to do as well as I can."

"Well, we'll call it five dollars and board, as long as you don't shirk. That's goin' wages, and I don't mind payin' it as long as I git good work."

Nan was quiet, industrious, and painstaking to such a degree, that Mrs. Bunyan volubly boasted to her neighbors of the paragon she had obtained. She was so well



pleased with Nan and so busy with her many boarding-house duties, that she eventually forgot her suspicions concerning the girl, and accepted in good faith the harmless little fiction which the latter recited to her. Nan wore the plainest clothes, saved all the money not absolutely necessary to be expended, and in the course of two years had purchased a few cheap lots on the outskirts of the town. About this time Pete Bunyan came to her and said :

"Hester and me would powerful hate to lose you, Kate, but you've been sech a good girl that we feel you ought to do better. I know a man that'll take yer lots at a good figger to speculate on; and that'll give you some ready money that'll help you in a little scheme that we've been talkin' over, if you're a mind to try it. There's a powerful fine piece of pasture land out on Mule Crick. It's got a mighty good flowin' spring on it, that'll irrigate about ten acres of land that lays under it, and then you could git all the rest of the hundred and sixty in pasture land, and it's the best feed on the crick; it would keep a sight of stock. Now whoever gits that is agoin' to do well. Jake Brown settled on it; but he's got no enterprise, and he's throwed it up, and if you want it, now's yer chance. There's a cabin on it, and you could settle down there, git you some stock, and let 'em grow into money, and do well."

Nan was surprised. "But I can't go alone, can I?" she asked.

"Yes, you can. Jest git a big watch-dog and a good six-shooter and you're all right. I've knowed several women settle down that way, and do well."

"Well, thank you, Mr. Bunyan, I believe I'll try it."

So that is how Nan came to occupy a cabin on Mule Creek. She sold her town lots, bought some good cows, a saddle and pony, and some books, and a little cheap furniture. She paid for her daily necessities with the excellent butter which she made, and which she carried to Hester's boarding house in a wooden pail. By her economy, she was even able to lay by small sums. She had settled on her ranch in April, and between that time and the following July she had ample time to make the acquaintance of her only neighbor, Mr. Tom Batts. Tom's ranch occupied the creek bottoms for a distance of half a mile, up and down, and spread far into the surrounding country on either side. It adjoined Kate's little quarter sec-



tion on the east. Tom was a rich man ; his sleek horses were numbered by the dozens, and his long-horned wild cattle, branded with the circle bar, were counted by the hundreds—almost by the thousands. But of his stock and of his broad acres, he was not so proud as of the blue coat and brass buttons which he always wore, and of the hat which bore the inscription, "G. A. R." across the front. Tom was one of the youngest members of Uncle Sam's family party in the trouble of '61-'65, and he was very proud of his right to wear the insignia of the noble band of veterans. He had rather tell over the scenes of Fort Donelson than to eat a turkey dinner, and preferred to read a wise view on the surrender at Appomattox to receiving all manner of encomiums upon his fat stock. He had become acquainted with Nan, soon after her settlement upon her ranch ; he was very well pleased with her ; he liked to go over in the pleasant afternoons and tell her all the intricate points about the capture of Fort Donelson ; there were so few people who understood them properly, and Nan seemed not only to understand them all, but her terror at his vivid portrayal of the shriek of shells and the dull roar of artillery, was very fine. Her pink cheeks positively paled when he told how the cannon balls had hissed about him—he knew, for he had watched—wonder if it was because—?

One July evening he sat on a chair just in front of Nan's cabin with a right new blue coat buttoned across his breast. Nan sat in her door ; she was pleasant to look upon ; she had grown plump and her face was full and rosy. The haggard, wearied look was gone, and she wore a sweet, youthful expression. The conference had evidently been long and interesting, since Tom was just finishing the effigy of a man which he had been constructing from a pine stick ; the carving was well done and had probably taken some two hours' work.

"Kate," said Tom, as he made a dangerous gash in the helpless effigy, "I've been a thinking that the best of us are not always as wise as we might be."

"Oh, I've often thought that, Mr. Batts."

"Now," he went on, as he cut the effigy in two very unequal parts, "here I am a living on my ranche all alone—all alone, with no company but my dog." He seemed to expect an answer ; but Nan only turned very red and pulled her dog by the ear. "Now I can't help



thinking," he went on, "that we might as well quit living alone—you and me—you're all alone too—we might just as well go to town some day and see a preacher."

Nan turned white; she had been lonely, and she had learned to hail with joy this man's presence. He had now sprung a question which would force her to tell the truth, and most likely drive him away. But it must be done. She would not deceive him. But as the horrible past came up she sickened—she wished she had died years ago; so before her resolution should have time to weaken, she sobbed out:

"I have something to tell you, Mr. Batts, and I believe I can trust you. I ask you to give me your word, that what I tell you shall never pass to any living soul."

"I'll do that, Kate. But if it's about you being a little behind in your payments on the cows—"

"It isn't that—the cows are all paid for. It's something else. You have asked me to marry you, and I've got to tell you that I'm not fit to. I won't be so mean as to deceive you. I—used—to—be—bad. I was engaged to marry a man, and he took advantage of the fact, and threatened me that he'd give me a bad name if I didn't give up. I was foolish and gave up, and then he left me and talked mean about me. The folks wouldn't let me stay at home and I couldn't work then, for I wasn't able. There was a little baby, and it died. No one would have anything to do with me, so I had to go to a bad house to live. I hated the life, and the being looked down on so, that finally I made up my mind that I'd run off and leave it all, even if I starved. So I came here, and I've behaved myself ever since I've been here, and I always intend to, no matter how much trouble I have. My real name is Nancy Catharine Allen, but I took my mother's name of Wilson when I came here. That's all," she said; and then she rocked to and fro in the door and sobbed aloud.

Perhaps in all that terrible four years era of sabre-clashing, shot, shell, prison, blood, and death, Tom Batts had never looked so ghastly. He arose to his feet and absolutely trembled as he looked upon the woman before him. Then, as if words were idle to a man in his situation, he gave a heavy groan and walked away in the direction of his ranche.

Nan saw him going, but she only sobbed on. It was what she had expected. She buried her face in her hands for the



first fit of weeping she had had since she left Sue Brown's house. It did her good. After a half hour's indulgence of her grief, she arose, took her pail, and went out to milk her cows. They loved her, poor creatures, in spite of her foulness—how lovingly they looked at her, as they complacently chewed their cuds. Her saddle-horse galloped up from the pasture, put his head over the cow lot fence, and nickered for his customary lump of sugar. There was something to live for after all. Men were ungenerous, selfish, and unforgiving, and in future she would trust only the friendship of brutes, her faithful dog, her horse, and her cows. But the slight was a deep one—he had been such good company, and he had always been so kind, and now he would never come again and she would be so lonely. Still she did not regret telling him; she would deceive no one who ought to know. But Oh, the sting of being left like that! She sobbed herself to sleep. She arose in the morning with a dull pain in her head, but the delicious breeze which blew upon her as she was milking her cows refreshed and cheered her. She began the preparation of her breakfast with a better heart, but before she had quite finished it, there came a knock at the door. It was opened by Tom Batts.

"Kate," he said, without waiting to say good-morning, "I made a durn fool of myself last night, and I've come over to ask your pardon. There wasn't in all the ranks at Donelson as durned sneaking a coward as I made of myself last night. May I come in?"

"Yes; come in. Take the rocker."

"Kate," he went on; "You're a durn sight honester than I'd have been. I've been thinking all night, and I hope it's done me good. I've been just as bad as ever you've been, and maybe worse, and I intended to marry you and not say a word about it. I know I don't deserve you, after the way I acted, but if you'll look over my cussedness and marry me, I'll try to be good to you. What do you say?"

"Oh! Oh!"

"Well, Kate, if you won't have me, I'll go back sorry enough."

"Won't you—eat some breakfast, Tom?"

"Well, I don't care if I do, Kate. I was so anxious to get over here that I didn't stop to get a single bite. So then you're willing, Kate?"



"Yes, Tom, I'm willing and I'll do my best for you, and I hope and believe we'll be happy. And now I must make a little more coffee." The tears ran down her face as she took up the mill, and they kept up their flow until she announced breakfast. The two did ample justice to the sweet, light bread and butter, bacon, coffee, and eggs. As they rose from the table, Tom said: "Now Kate, just let your dishes go. I've got some business in town to-day; my horse is tied to the fence and I'll saddle your horse while you get ready. If it'll suit you to get married to-day, it'll suit me. What do you say?"

Kate, or Nan, was suited and the two were soon galloping toward town. They were married in Hester Bunyan's parlor. As they rode back, Tom said:

"Now Kate, you've defended yourself, for your sins, and now I feel as if I wanted to say a few words in my behalf. I can't say that any woman forced me to do wrong by a batch of lies and threats; but still my surroundings and teachings were such that I feel I'm not altogether to blame. Boys have very strong imaginations, and while I know that I ought not to speak ill of my father and mother, still I feel that they failed in their duty to me in several respects. They had certainly forgotten how easily a child's mind is impressed and directed by what it sees and hears, and they joked in my presence about things which they had better left unmentioned. Then mother never seemed to care for me, only to give me plenty to eat and wear, and humor me a good deal, when I needed punishment more. She never read to me, nor reasoned with me, nor tried to convince me that other people had the same natural rights that I had. She wouldn't play with me, nor try to entertain me; she always seemed to be so much older than I was, and there was no sympathy between us. She was something of a gossip, and when she had company, as she nearly always had, she'd send me out of doors so she and they could talk. Well, I soon got to know why I was sent out. I got to listening at doors and windows, and wherever I could catch a word, for there was nearly always a dirty story going on inside the house. Of course they put the bulk of the blame on the women, and made out that sin was quite the proper thing for the men; and I tell you, Kate, the worst thing that I see about all this disgusting business, is the tame way that women give up to bad husbands. It goes farther to show



that they're completely cowed than anything else I know of. I tell you, Kate, when a class has been so mistreated as to become as servile as a majority of the women are, it's high time to look out for the public welfare. Well, the way mother did was bad, but it wasn't the only bad thing. Father and the hired men talked, and encouraged me to talk, about things that we all ought to have been ashamed to mention; and when I got older the hired men would put me up to insult the neighbor girls; and if I was slow about it, they'd call me a coward, and tell me that I'd never be any sort of a man at all, if I didn't show more grit. Well, things kept on that way, till I got to thinking that meanness was manliness, that cowardice was bravery, and that yielding to the bad advice of others was independence. So I got started wrong. I saw I was losing self-respect, and cheerfulness, and interest in what I read; but I'd got started, and I just kept on. Father just laughed, and said that a young man had to sow his wild oats. I've learned since that time that wild oats always stick to a field when once they get a start in it; and I've found that they have stuck to me in the shape of regrets, remorse, unpleasant memories, and loss of cheerfulness, and a real interest in life. I'm not particularly trying to clear myself of blame, Kate; but in justice to us, you ought to know that men have more temptations than women; and I believe that if girls, right from their cradles up, were allowed to see everything, and encouraged to talk everything mean, and pointed at as cowards if they refused to do low-down things, why, I do not believe that there would be any more pure women than there are pure men. I tell you, Kate, as long ago as I can remember I had vile practices, and my parents knew of them, and would either wink at each other slyly, or pass by without noticing. I wasn't a stubborn child, and I believe that if my mother had taken me on her knee and reasoned with me, that I would have been easily controlled in the matter. I know that a mother has heavy responsibilities; but then if she is not willing to shoulder them, she oughtn't to be a mother. I think she deserves the holiest and purest treatment of any creature on earth; and then I think she ought to make herself thoroughly worthy of it. Lots of people get married, and go to raising children, when they're not fit to raise pigs; and I tell you if there's anything at all that a child has got an absolute



right to demand, and to make a fuss about if he don't get it, it's good raising. Of course the faulty parent is not all to blame—he in his turn has been carelessly brought up and likely enough his parents before him. But the faultiest person can improve himself some, if he'll quietly set to work and study himself, and try to weed out the interests that the Old Harry has in him, and just in proportion as he improves himself, his children will be improved. A man can obtain his mean qualities and his dishonesties from two sources only—from what he inherits and from what he is permitted to learn. The parents can modify inheritance, but can not wholly change it; they can almost entirely control what the child is permitted to learn; and if they are sufficiently earnest and painstaking, they can teach him to control all inherited failings. This will not be easily done; some pleasures and indulgences will have to be foregone; the great world will have to be opposed and to some extent neglected; but while the parent is neglecting the world in one way, he is studying its good in a more direct one. The best thing we can do for the world is to rear good citizens who will study its improvement. The woman who expects to rear noble children must give them her time; she must be their first love, and her sentiments must form the foundation of their greatness. The ideas, the theories, and the facts which they learn from her will always be first in their hearts.

“ Well, as soon as I was old enough to reason for myself, I got thoroughly disgusted, and resolved that I'd behave myself, and never let go of decency again. I kept the resolve; but that didn't bring back the self-respect that I'd lost. And there's another thing, Kate; it was more surprise than anger that sent me away from you last night. Men get to thinking that those women are hardly human, and they lose all human feeling for 'em; and when I saw you there, so neat and intelligent and lady-like, and heard what you had to say of yourself, I was dumbfounded. When I got to thinking it over a little, I waked up to my senses. I know that lots of women are natural criminals just as lots of men are, but I know that lots more become bad from being sneaked and deceived and lied to and lied about, and that these latter would lots of 'em be just as pure as anybody's mother or sister, if only they had had a fair chance. Weakness destroys thousands more people than meanness does. Then lots of those women would



come out yet and try to do right, if only the world would give 'em half a chance, which it won't. I've seen the lowest dogs marry pure women, and the world was ready to carry 'em round on a chip as soon as they'd made a little money.

"And the more I think of this marriage of ours, Kate, the more faith I have in it's being just the right kind of one for you and me. We are equals, and equals make the best of teams, whether for driving, racing, or heavy draft work. No impure person has any right to a pure one, unless the pure one knows all about the other, and goes into the marriage open-eyed; and even then I don't have much respect for the match. And if we have children, Kate, I don't want any pictures of half-naked women, with great beefsteak arms, and vulgar exposures of flashy necks and limbs, hanging about the house to excite their evil natures, and keep back the better qualities of mind and heart. I tell you that if vulgar stories and obscene language were forgotten, lots of harm would still be done by the soft, impressionable minds of children dwelling upon half-nude pictures. I think that if people have a liking for pretty women's pictures, that it's all right—they won't get anything prettier. But I can't see how any beauty is added by showing a quarter-section of neck and breast, or a disgusting lower limb. If all women dressed like men, wore trousers to keep their limbs covered, and it was the custom, I'd see no particular harm in it. People would be used to it, and would not think the publishing of the limbs vulgar, so long as they were properly covered. Still, I'd see nothing to be gained by it; the skirts are infinitely prettier than trousers would be, and they look comfortable and modest. I like the idea of the sexes dressing differently, and believe that women can wear properly made skirts and feel just as well in them as men feel in their clothes. But women are prettier than men, and are for the ornament of the race, while we men are more for the strength—I mean physically only, Kate—and I will always like the idea of your looking prettier and more graceful than I. But I can't see that vulgarity adds anything to beauty, and I do know that it appeals to the lowest natures of men and boys.

"And now, Kate, I hope we'll be happy. We've both been through enough shame and sorrow and trouble, to make us reason and think about what we do. We've got



nothing to reproach each other with, and there's no need of us worrying over a past that we've redeemed so well. I feel that we've made a good move by this marriage; and on the whole, I haven't felt so well since we took Donelson."

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE PARTIAL OUTCOME OF A DREAM OF LOVE.

AFTER the talk with Hetty Ann Bales, Gessia felt a little more strength of endurance, but no more happiness than before. What consolation was it for her to know that other women were miserable? She was not one who wished others to suffer because she suffered. If we are in prison, let us rejoice that some of our friends are free, and able to help, rather than that all are as helpless as ourselves.

He who dies from heart-break dies a slow and awful death. Gessia's glad, eager spirit had been killed by the agony of that first loss of faith, but her strong, healthy body survived. She performed the household duties expected of her, but the work was entered without interest and finished without triumph. She no longer cared whether the floors were faultlessly clean, or whether the glassware sparkled and shone. Why should the house be clean and spotless, while character was soiled? Weary days glide together and make up weary weeks; weary weeks make weary months; and the months form into groups of twelve, and make years. The time rolled slowly on. She was compelled, in her husband's presence, to assume a cheerfulness that she did not feel, or put up with a persecution as galling as it was continuous. And then he was all she had; she had thrown aside the world for him, and she must make the best of her lot. And presently her three-quarters of a year of sickness came to an end. After twelve hours of bodily torture, so fearful that words are idle in its description, she lay white and still upon her bed, with her bloodshot eyes bent upon a little baby at her side. John was in raptures; he was a father, and more than that, the father of a son. The only thing to interfere with his happiness was the fact that Gessia had taken on so—Gessia always did take on about the least thing—he



might have expected it, of course. But he would keep up the role of good husband, no matter if his wife were perverse.

"Now, Gessia, brace up and look cheerful," he said. "Just think what a nice boy we have."

"I hope he'll be good man," faltered Gessia.

"Of course, he will be—good enough for anybody. I'm going to raise him to be honorable, but I don't want him to be silly or fanatical."

"If he is good, he'll be neither," answered Gessia. Then she pressed her lips to the little pink forehead, and great tears fell upon the little face. She groaned aloud as she thought of the rapture that might have been. But her tears and groans were for a lost cause; she felt that happiness had fled forever, but hope for the little creature at her side was left. He would one day be a man, and he was hers to educate, to shape and to mould. Might not the realization of her hope come in him? Might not he be her dream-hero, who would believe that the person of every woman was as sacred, as much to be respected and protected, as that of his wife, mother, or sister? So with the birth of this son, hope was born again, and the child of the imagination lay beside his twin brother of the flesh, and cheered the unhappy wife. And as she lay, day after day, on her white bed, carefully tended by her nurse, life again took on a few roseate tints, because there was again in her small circle an unsullied individuality to love.

But the baby was cross. He kicked and squirmed and cried when there seemed to be no excuse for so doing. He let go of his mother's breast to look up into her face and cry out in a voice of infinite woe. He cried at night, in the morning, and in the daytime; he supplied a regular and well filled program of music. John was disappointed. He feared that the baby was going to be like his mother.

"Mrs. Solomon," said the nurse one day, "you must have had something on your mind; you must have worried about something. I never saw a crosser child."

"Oh, I think he isn't well," answered Gessia.

"But he is well; he is extra-hearty, and grows like a weed. He is either craving something, or else he's worrying about something." Gessia laughed sadly. "How can a baby that knows nothing at all, worry about anything?" she asked.

"Their knowing nothing has nothing to do with it; if



the mother has had anything on her mind that she oughtn't to have had, the child'll worry about it. I've seen it often enough." Gessia was silent; she remembered what Hetty Ann Bales had said about troubles being easier to manage when kept at home.

She was soon up again, and her nurse left her. Then her household duties and her care of the baby kept her very busy. She was sorry that the baby was so cross, but it was too late now—like everything else she had hoped for, her child was a disappointment.

"What does make that young one so infernal cross?" asked John one day when the entertainment had been louder, and a little more persistent than usual.

"The nurse said it was because I had worried about something," said Gessia.

John frowned heavily; "I wouldn't be a bit surprised if that is it, Gessia," he said, in a deeply injured tone. "If you'd acted like other women, we might have had a nice baby, and been happy. But now here's a squalling young one added to the rest of our troubles." And John sighed deeply.

"I couldn't help worrying," said Gessia. "If you were to stab a man, would you blame the wound for bleeding?"

"I think, and I always have thought," said John; "that when a thing is past and gone, that the only sensible way is to make the best of it."

"If any one had done you so grievous a wrong, you would *not* have tried to make the best of it. If any one had deceived you, and tricked you into an alliance with a soiled creature, you would have seen the matter in a very different light. It was wrong to degrade those poor creatures as you did; and it was a still greater wrong to deceive a pure woman into marrying you, and then after she is bound and helpless, tell her that which you knew must embitter her life."

"But, Gessia, you ought to be reasonable; it's all done now. I'm sorry I did it, but it's too late to fret over it. You can't change the world, and so you had better adapt yourself to it. You will have to learn to take people as they are, and not as they should be."

"That argument has been used by too many tyrants, to palliate too many deeds of injustice and crime; it is the old threadbare argument that ages of oppression have



called in to blind the thinkers of the world to the enormity of their deeds. You do not mean it, John; it is the argument of desperation, and is unworthy your intelligence. It is impossible that you should wish me to adapt my soul to such a vile thing as the public opinion of this world; you simply wish me to look over your mistakes, and to forgive you. I can do that so far as ceasing to harbor resentment is concerned, but I can never come to look contentedly on a crime. I'd rather lose your love, my own life, or the baby's, than to see the day when I could smilingly ally myself with shame. I have given myself to you, to be your wife, and I'll be true to you, and to what children may come. But it is not right that I should be your wife, and for that reason I can never be glad and happy. I did wrong to live with you an instant after what you told me, but it was all so sudden that it drove thought away. Then I found that the baby was coming, and I knew I couldn't leave; now, I will not. I will cling to the baby, and my one hope is to make him a good man. You say that if the world is wrong that I must adapt myself to it; I say not. If the world is intolerable to one who desires only good to its inhabitants, it is wrong, and should be changed. It should be made to adapt itself to the noblest ideas of the noblest people."

"That is very easy to say, but how will you do it?"

"It will not be done by trampling upon its helpless creatures, and feasting and lauding its greatest rogues—by pointing the finger of scorn at its writhing victims, and sickening with adulation its most inhuman tyrants. It will only be done by the echoes of martyrs' cries and by the evolutions of sages' brains. Earth has stricken with death a few of her forms of oppression and injustice; but the cries and groans and curses that arise on every hand, prove to us that she has only begun."

John did not pursue the subject, and slow as he was to weep, the tears rose to his eyes—great tears of sorrow that such a good, moderate fellow should have so little prospect of happiness. What was the use of arguing with this woman who utterly refused to see his life through the eyes of the great, generous, sensible world? He tickled the baby under the chin and wondered if all men were so devilish unlucky. Here, after being just as careful as he could in his choosing, and passing by women with property, to marry the one he loved, he must be treated like



this. Suddenly he seemed to think of something; he threw his head backward and said, with as much of a swagger as he could possibly assume:

"Look here, Gessia, you are always prating morals so loud, now look at it this way: Now those women are already ruined; they get hungry, and if they are not patronized they'll starve. Now the money I gave those women may have been a blessing to them—they might have been hungry."

"Need you have degraded yourself, to save them from hunger? Could you not have handed a suffering fellow creature money for her needs, if she had asked it, without polluting your body and deadening your sense of shame? Need you have purchased your own disgrace with the alms you gave?" John resumed his silence; it was clearly of no use to talk to Gessia; she couldn't reason; she was the most prejudiced creature he had ever seen. More than that, she was out of her place to speak up and upbraid her husband in that fashion; she was unwomanly and he would tell her of it.

"Gessia," he said, "I think its a woman's place to attend to her children and do her duty about her house, and not worry so much about morals and things she doesn't know anything about. You are out of your place when you take my arguments up and put them to scorn."

"People are always out of place when they oppose us in argument or attempt to criticise our faults. I do not see why one should be called out of place because he advances an honest opinion. As for my home and my child, I do not neglect them, and I shall not do so while my strength holds out. I know that I am peevish and fretful, but you sprung your cruel secret upon me just in time to murder all my happiness. I have fretted over it during my period of delicate health until I fear for my mind. You know that I was once as gay and happy as a child, but my nature is such that my cheerfulness can not survive the death of faith. Be patient. I will try not to bring up the subject again."

"No; but you'll look it, and walk it, and sigh it."

"The wound is there; it is certain to show, but be as patient as you can."

As the months rolled on, Gessia's health began to fail. The endless heartache, the many household duties, the nursing of the baby, and its continued fretting, were grad-



ually stealing away the plumpness of her form, and the bloom of her cheek. But she was fairer than ever; her great dark eyes shone forth like stars from her thin white face, and not even the heavy household duties could rob her hands of their waxen loveliness. She moved about the house uncomplainingly, and performed all the duties of a housewife; but she seemed like a lovely spirit walking a round of duty. John watched her with an aching heart. Of course she was cranky and cross and unreasonable, but then she was so loving and sweet once—he feared she would never be again. He found it impossible to wish he had not married her, much as he regretted her change. He always said to himself that she was sweeter to him in her white and suffering discontent, than any other woman would be in radiant smiles. But sometimes thoughts came to him that made him quake with fear; she was so white and still. Would she never get over it, and be cheerful, and make him happy? If she failed to do so, he would lose faith in the theory that goodness is rewarded with happiness. He had been so reasonable and moderate—so much better than other men, that he thought himself worthy of great happiness.

“Gessia,” he said one morning. “You might just as well talk about the trouble as to look and act the way you do. Every step you take is a proclamation that you are unhappy.”

“Oh, what good can come from talking—or from anything else?”

“Why don’t you get your mind on other things? Think about educating Ralph. You know how much harm you did him by fretting, and now that you expect another one, you are going on in just the same way.”

“I cannot help it. It has injured my mind. I can no longer control my thoughts. What have I to hope for for the children? How can I expect them to be self-respecting? Of course, you do not care if your sons are vicious, but let me ask you how you can hope that your daughters will not inherit your vile traits? Are children supposed to draw only the traits of the mother, and reject those of the father?”

“Oh, well, people that have girls have to take care of them. Of course they’d do wrong if they were not looked after.”

“Then if either sex will do wrong when not properly



raised, why not also try to teach a little morality to the boys, and keep them, also, carefully up to the line of moral excellence that is demanded for their sisters?"

"Well, they'd suffer with their passions."

"Would they? And yet you think that it makes no difference how much women suffer in consequence of those same passions. How many go to life-long misery and shame, how many blush for insults received, or how many feel the agony that I am feeling now. Society requires that we women shall conquer our passions, and hold them under complete subjection; but it does not ask you even to restrain yours. The bringing forth of a child is three quarters of a year of endless sickness and suffering. Then after the little one has come, there is a life of responsibility to raise and educate it, and direct its little mind. Is not the burden of continued child-rearing heavy enough without the weight of disgrace being added?"

"How is what I've done to hurt you?"

"Put yourself in my place. Imagine yourself—"

"Oh, yes, bring that up. Why don't you quit thinking about it? Why don't you dress up and visit around like Mrs. Ransom, and have a good time?"

"What happiness could come to me from covering my shamed flesh with silk, or trying to hide the suffering in my face with paints and cosmetics? No, I will not stifle the voice of my shame when it wishes to cry aloud, nor will I deafen my ears to the cry of my fallen sisters. I will not allow myself to become callous and cruel."

"You are going on at a terrible rate, Gessia, and saying a lot of things that you have no business to say; but why can't you remember that nearly all men practice such habits? How can you blame me for doing as nearly all other men do?"

"The man who resolutely directs his own course in spite of the opposing forces of public custom, must indeed be strong; but it is only he who does so, that awakens the world to the fact that it has ceased to roll on, and causes it to leave the corpses of its crimes and tyrannies behind. The world is easily satisfied with its record; it is so busy with its amusements and its gains, that it cannot hear the cries of those that it is crushing and destroying. When it is forced to make a reform it makes it, and then stops satisfied, until some rash, but noble individual points out



to it a neglected offense and resolutely lashes it into new endeavor."

"I used to think, Gessia, that you loved *me*, but I have found that it was only my reputation that you loved."

"Love? Love is the fair and frail and beautiful statue that is founded upon the lofty pedestal, respect. And just in proportion as the pedestal is firm and sure, is the statue safe for preservation. But when the pedestal is snatched away, the fair creation falls whirling and hurtling to the unfeeling earth, where it is crushed out of recognition. If the statue be coarse and heavy and rude, it will be less injured by the fall; but if it be lofty, fairy-like, etherial and majestic, it will be mangled and lost; and no tears shed over its scattered fragments, and no human skill can remodel, or make it what it has been."

John bent his head and covered his face with his hands; the bitterness which in his youth he had stored up for his manhood was making itself tasted. "Why won't you understand that the passion of youth carries away reason?" he asked.

"Passion? Passion, when it is unsullied by a vile and perverted imagination, is holy. It prompts a man to undertake the support of a woman, and to keep himself and her away from the rest of the world, for the sake of mutual bliss. It prompts him to love and nurture and carefully educate the children of that union. It roofs the house that shall shelter his loved ones from the storm, and it nerves his arm as he toils for their bread. It thrills the hands of the wife as she prepares her husband's food, and sends a quiver of delight to the breast from which her babe draws its life. Passion alone never yet insulted a woman, nor destroyed the chastity of a man. It is only when it is perverted by a vicious imagination and fed by vile stories in which the rights of virtue are scoffed at, and when it is supplemented by the tyranny of self-gratification, that it becomes dangerous, and rules the human tenebment in which it dwells."

"Well, anyhow, Gessia, I never thought that you'd be like you are. I never saw a more cheerful person than you used to be; I thought that you could get over anything."

"Oh, John, I believe that those who are capable of the greatest happiness, provided it be honest, unselfish happiness, are also capable of the greatest misery."



## CHAPTER X.

### A REMINDER OF THE OLD TIME.

THE months rolled on until a second son was given to the Solomons. He was fat and hearty, and resembled Ralph very closely, both in personal appearance and in his manner of exercising his lungs to their utmost capacity. His cry was perhaps a little more full and resonant than the well-remembered baby wail of his brother, but still there was a strong general resemblance. Ralph had made up in continuity what he lacked in volume. The new son was christened Henry, but the water of baptism seemed to make no progress in washing away his grief. He kicked just as persistently, and screamed just as loud as ever.

Gessia dismissed her help as soon as she could make the rounds of the house—she was almost glad that there was so much work to do—it kept in check the maddening devils of thought that pursued her. She cooked, washed, baked, mended, nursed, and soothed mechanically, and all the time the whining of Ralph and the screaming of Henry made imps of discordant sound that danced in her weary ears. The march of suffering was recorded in her white face, and the Giant Despair looked ceaselessly out of her great staring eyes. Then she would think of her girlhood days when life had been so sweet and fair—when after her lessons were given she owned her time, and could read and write, or visit lecture, concert, or theatre. There had been cares then, but there was no shame. As she thought it over, the rippling of glossy ribbons, the sweet perfume of lace-trimmed handkerchiefs, the soft touch of pale-tinted gloves, the rustle of well-laundried white dresses, the eagerness, the ambition, the hope of youth, would come back upon her wearied senses, and for a time lull her perturbed spirit into peaceful reveries, only to yield again to the agonies of fact. Her sweet girlhood years were gone forever, and she had been given in return for them, misery and despair. Sometimes she half believed that the institution of marriage was a failure; but when her reason would return, she would wearily say: “No, it is not marriage that is to blame; marriage is good enough for man, but very few men are good enough for marriage.”



One afternoon she sat rocking the babe, while little Ralph hung to the arm of the rocker crying to be taken. She made room for him by taking the babe on her arm, and then swaying back and forth she wearily sang:

“ Oh come, let us drink of the waters of Lethe  
And quickly forget earth's tears, trouble, and pain;  
We'll float on the billows of hope's untried sea,  
Till the breakers of fact cast us shoreward again.

“ Oh, then shall up-spring the dear thoughts of our youth,  
Like buoys that shall guide us to virtue and peace;  
We'll shun the sharp reef-rocks of crime and despair,  
And float happily on, to the spirit's release.

“ The bark that is sailing bears only our souls—  
They are hasting away seeking refuge and rest,  
They are weary and sick of old earth's long despair,  
Oh, sweet be their voyage and happy their quest.

“ Oh, then shall up-spring the dear thoughts of our youth,  
Like buoys that shall guide us to virtue and peace,  
We'll shun the sharp reef-rocks of crime and despair,  
And float happily on, to the spirit's release.”

The children loved their mother's singing, and were consequently silent during its progress; but when at its close a knock was heard at the door, they recommenced their cry. She carried the two to the door—the babe in her arms and Ralph on her skirts.

“ Mr. De Kalb!” she said, in surprise. “ Come in. Why, I thought that you had left this part of the country.”

“ I have not been about here for some time,” said De Kalb, as he took the chair she offered. “ I am principal of a school in Bannertown and I've been kept pretty close for the last four years. But I'm off for the summer now, so I thought I'd get out and see some old friends. I see you have two fine children. But you, Mrs. Solomon—pardon me, but you do not look so well as you did when I saw you at the ball.”

“ Oh,” said Gessia, wearily, as she soothed the baby, and endeavored to subdue the superior order of whining with which Ralph was entertaining the company, “ that is a long time ago; so many things have happened since then.”

“ It is only a little more than four years, I believe; or am I mistaken?”

“ Is it only that long? Well, I have forgotten. But years do not count; other things do. These two little children take up a great deal of my time and strength. I



do not get much time to read, and I do not care to go about. Life gets heavier as cares come on."

"Perhaps, Mrs. Solomon, you may not have time to entertain me; and if your duties are too numerous to allow of your giving me any time, I hope that you will tell me so, and I will cease to intrude."

"Oh, no!" said Gessia, with more earnestness than she had shown for months, "Do not go. I am glad you came. Your visit brings back a glimpse of a lost time." And though ashamed of the weakness which was produced by a failing reason, the tears flowed down her face. There was an awkward pause which neither felt like breaking. Finally Gessia spoke.

"Are you doing well?" she asked.

"Exceedingly well. My salary is good, and my surroundings very pleasant. My health, too, has improved so much that I have nothing to complain of in that direction."

"How differently our lives have turned out," she said. "When we met at the ball in Deer Trail Park, you were discouraged and sickly; you told me that your life had little promise; now you are well, happy, and hopeful. Then I was so happy that I scarcely believed in the reality of calamity; now I am prematurely old, faded, and careworn."

De Kalb looked at her thoughtfully. "Mrs. Solomon," he said, "if a conscientious young man were to see you now, after having watched you flying about at the ball that night, and should believe that marriage had made the transformation, he would hesitate about asking any woman to sacrifice single life for his sake."

"A conscientious man, Mr. De Kalb? I fear that such are very scarce. Men are most of them exceedingly conscientious and careful where their own pleasure and interest is concerned; but what is a woman's fondest hope to them? We are the worms beneath their feet."

And as she spoke her eyes shot a gleam that awed him. His face turned white, but his heart was burning. No other woman had ever made the impression on his mind and heart that this one had. He had loved her, had dreamed of her, had composed sonnets to her, and had resolved to seek her for his wife, when the news of her marriage had come to blast his hopes. Then, indeed, had he driven back his love, for it was unholy to love the married; but



her image was always a sweet memory to him. He remembered now of his misgivings when he first heard of the marriage—his acquaintance with John was quite meagre, but he had studied his face and voted him callous and cruel; now, the white, stricken creature before him proved this. But what right had he to interfere in her life? The time when he might have influenced that, had long since fled. Yet there was one question that puzzled him much, and about which he must ask.

“Mrs. Solomon,” he said, “I hope that you will pardon me if I tread upon forbidden ground, but there is one matter that I have often thought upon. I remember well what you said during our long talk about a woman’s nature, her loves, and her duties. You said that a beautiful woman might do infinite harm if she were malicious or even careless; and that if a woman intended to marry, she should aim to attract only the man she expected to take for her husband. I have often thought of what you said, and believed that you entered into your marriage from purely conscientious motives.”

Gessia looked down at her children. The baby had cried himself to sleep, and Ralph had whined himself into a slumber. She excused herself to carry them into the bedroom. As she resumed her chair, she said: “The time was when I tried to regulate my slightest as well as my weightiest acts by the stern rule of right. But I have learned that even this strict watch of one’s conduct will not always insure happiness. Human beings are so bound, so knit together, that the misdeeds of a single person often insure misery to a great number. A short time after my marriage, circumstances compelled me to commit a wrong which was a life-long injury to myself and a serious example for others. It was a thing that I had often declared I would never do, but circumstances compelled me to do it. The wrong does not cease with myself. I was unhappy, restless, and sorrowing; and for that reason my children, to whom I owed the noblest birthrights, are peevish, irritable, and gloomy. I love them, but my love continually reproaches me for wronging them by giving them such natures. If life were not too sad a thing to admit of laughter, I would feel like laughing at all human attempts. I know that my aims were high and my motives pure, yet my life is a dead failure, and my hopes mock me.”



"Mrs. Solomon, I cannot help believing that the circumstances that forced you to do wrong, are more to blame than yourself."

"I know," she said, "that I was cowardly because I did not keep my word. But I had loved my husband, I was bound to him, and I remembered the solemn promise I had made. Then the world is a stern critic, and it did not believe as I did. As long as I accepted the wrong and abided by it, the world would commend me; I stayed and the world calls me faithful. Its frown is fearful, yet its commendation has not soothed nor satisfied me. I knew all the time that I was living a wrong life, and this knowledge, together with the memory of a broken vow, is killing me. My two little children, who are so hopelessly wronged, are the only ties which bind me here. In death only can I find the peace that I have lost."

De Kalb sprung from his chair. "Why should you die for an offense that was forced upon you?" he cried, hoarsely. "Who compelled you to do it? For whose sake was the offense committed?"

"Sir," she said, quietly, "women marry, many of them know almost nothing of sin, and have great faith in the husbands they love. After they are married they learn dreadful things—things that take out of life all that makes its drudgery worth doing. And yet, because they have bound themselves, and because the world says they must yield, they sanction these crimes by living in the closest relations with those who committed them. This is what I have done. I have sanctioned thus an offense that of all crimes seems to me the most useless, disgusting, and horrible. There is no way out of it but into the grave, and I most earnestly hope that when I am there that my rest will be an eternal sleep, lest upon waking I feel again these relentless arrows of shame."

De Kalb arose, lifted his chair and set it violently down again; then he strode back and forth across the floor, and ground his teeth in agony. But why should he do this? The woman had been given to another and not to him; it was not his privilege to right her wrongs. But to see this woman, whom he deemed fit to grace a palace and cheer the sorrows of a hero, made thus a victim of tyranny and an ally of shame, almost made him forget the gulf between them—not between her and his love, for that was forgot-



ten; but between her defenselessness and his right to avenge her wrongs.

"She has cast her pearls before swine," he muttered savagely to himself. Then he gazed out of the window, but he saw nothing. He turned and walked back to her.

"Mrs. Solomon" he said, "the world is indeed too strong for many of us. We find ourselves beset with evils which come upon us so suddenly and unexpectedly that we know not how to fight them. I have made it a rule to study my actions, and when I found that I was doing wrong, to stop, no matter what the effort cost. But this is no consolation to you. You cannot stop your present course, for nature has added links to the chain that binds you."

"I do not ask to stop. Nature is merciful, and through the avenue of the grave I will gain liberty."

Her voice was torture to him, but what right had he to interfere in the inner ruling of this house? He feared that he had already said too much, but the sight of this helpless creature, whose only protector had become a tyrant and a jailer, was too much for his prudence. Suddenly he turned and said:

"I have no right to ask it; but is your husband happy?"

"I fear not," she replied. "He often tells me how happy I might have made him, if I had only done as he wished, and as other women did, but I couldn't do that—I couldn't content myself with his record of shame."

De Kalb turned again, and strode back and forth across the floor and muttered to himself. "That man had everything to make him happy," he muttered. "*Everything*, and yet he has trampled it under foot and wasted it all." Then he said aloud:

"Mrs. Solomon, I am going away to-day, and will not be back here this season—perhaps never again. But I want to tell you that I am glad we have known each other. The world is fearfully cruel and heartless, and on every side arises the cry of the crushed and the helpless. So far as I personally am concerned, I have no social sins to blush for; my mother saved me from that. She died when I was only a child, but I have never forgotten her teachings in regard to justice to others. But I have been cold and thoughtless. I have been careful of myself, but have neglected to influence others as I might have done. The mentals of young men need attention, to be sure;



but people forget that their morals need quite as much training, if not more. People do not expect their sons to rise to intellectual ability without giving them strong intellectual training; then how can they expect them to rise to moral grandeur through moral neglect? It is my opinion that if part of the time spent in putting useless acquirements into young people's heads, was spent in putting moral strength in their hearts, that the result would be much more productive of happiness. I will from this on try to make myself more of a companion to the young men under my charge, and try to influence them for good. I bid you good-day." And without touching the fair, wasted hand he withdrew from the house.

Gessia sat silent in her chair until her husband came in.

"Who was that man that was here so long?" asked the latter.

"Mr. De Kalb, that I met at the ball in the park, about four years ago;" she replied.

"You'll get your name up, Gessia, receiving men when you are alone."

"What right have you, stained as you are with filth, to preach duty to me?" she said, in a voice that approached a shriek, while a dangerous light flashed from her eyes.

"Oh, you've got an awful bad husband!" said John, in a mocking tone. "Suppose I had beaten you, like some men do their wives?"

"I would rather you had! I would rather, when I believed our love was pure, that you had taken me in your arms and stabbed me to the heart. So long as I believed you were all mine, I could have kissed your hand, all red with my blood, and sunk down and died with my lips pressed to your feet."

"Do you know what you are saying? You are telling me that I am worse than a murderer!"

"You *are* a murderer! Your crime was the infliction of an agonizing wound that takes years to kill. There is no warm blood gushing out of my broken heart to tell me that my death agony will be short. Mine is a long, slow march to the grave, where every step is fraught with pain, and where every land-mark tells of defeat."

"You are insane!"

"Yes, I am insane! You have produced in me two kinds of insanity; the first was the insanity of love—the second the insanity of despair. A man can so live as to



produce either of these in his home. You have taken your choice. Abide by it!"

Gessia fainted for the first time in her life; she fell from her chair. She was soon aroused by the vigorous ministrations of her thoroughly frightened husband; she found herself upon the lounge, with her husband's tears falling upon her face. Perhaps the latter did more to bring back her senses than all his studied efforts. She looked at him with the wondering stare which is common to one just emerging from a fainting-fit.

"What are you crying for, John?" she asked, as if trying in vain to recollect what had passed.

"Oh, Gessia," he answered, "I want to talk to you. You don't know what danger you are in. Why, I'm actually afraid for your mind. Your voice is unnatural, and your eyes take on a terrible look sometimes. You must stop and think. You are too excitable to worry so much. Now I can begin to see that I did wrong, but then it wasn't my fault. Ike Ransom is to blame for every bit of it. I'm ashamed of myself, but I can't help it now. And you must think seriously about yourself. There's an awful thing might happen to you—something worse than death. You must quiet your nerves, and quit thinking on such dreary subjects. If you'd like to go driving to-morrow, I'll stop everything to take you." And John, having now made a deeper apology than he had ever made before in his life, felt that his wife ought to recognize his complacency and return at once to the old time cheerfulness. But she only said:

"I'm glad that you see your wrong, John; I know that I'll feel better now."

When crime enters a life, it proclaims the birth of tyranny and deceit; the offender becomes to a greater or less degree a tyrant, because in his desire to defend his sin, he uses brutality and force—he must use these because there is no argument to defend either injustice or injury to the helpless. He becomes deceitful because there are always some persons before whom he wishes to appear clean; and, because, when comes the time that he shall regret his sin—as come it certainly will—he will endeavor to lay the blame of his mistakes upon the shoulders of another. A man is always in some degree to blame for his mistakes; it may be only slightly. If he has yielded to the the malicious teachings of another, his crimes are his lack of discernment between



right and wrong, and his weakness under persuasion. If he is incompetent to maintain a straight moral record through neglect on the part of his parents, he is indeed unfortunate; still, if he fall, there will be blame on his side, be it ever so small. The world is a great and a severe teacher, and from it he might have learned. Perhaps it may be said that he was by nature too callous and unintelligent to understand the life-lessons he saw around him—if this be true, such moral apathy is one of the most dangerous crimes which beset and menace society. Ignorance of books is not half so much to be deplored, and to be fought, as is ignorance of what constitutes justice to our fellows.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### THE EVIL WAYS OF THE HATTONS.

IT is necessary at this point in our story to go back a little and take up the narrative of that particularly unwise individual, Frank Hatton. It has already been stated that Ike Ransom had succeeded in destroying the good name of Sallie Lentz. Her relations with him, however, had continued but a short time. She had soon perceived his utter hardness of heart, his callous selfishness, and his utter obtuseness in regard to the welfare and rights of others. So when she learned that he had no intention of marrying her, she abandoned him, cut his acquaintance, and made friends with Frank Hatton, who was kind to her and who had often warned her against Ike.

Several years after the beginning of this new intimacy she became the mother of a fine boy. Frank, upon this, pledged himself to marry her, whenever she should name the day. But as he had not a dollar of his own, and was dissipated and out of employment, Sallie saw nothing to be gained by immediate marriage, since the time for saving her good name was long since past. But the engagement still continued, and Sally, because she could get no honest employment, went, with Frank's consent, into the dance-house at Milroy City. This was, of course, a very bad arrangement, but Frank was one of those foolish men



who reasoned that it was no worse for his intended bride to be in a house of questionable reputation, than it was for him to be there. If he had been broadly and generously educated, like many young men are, he would have insisted that his intended stay at home and make tatting, while he was telling lewd jokes and kissing the paint off of wasted cheeks, in a house such as our grand civilization approves and licenses.

By the time the child was four years old, Frank had accumulated a few head of cattle and a moderately good team of horses. He rented the Davidson ranche, married Sallie, and moved with her into the neat little stone house, in its little clump of fruit-trees. The child was brought home from the house of an old woman, where he had been kept, in return for a small monthly stipend paid by Sallie, and the little family took its place as one of the households of Boulder Creek.

Of course all of Frank's friends had come to him individually and collectively, and warned him against doing such a foolish thing. If he wanted to turn over a new leaf, why not do it right? Why not leave the bad women he had been running with, marry a nice girl, and be somebody? If he married that strumpet and recognized that child, nobody would visit with his family, and his chances of being elected to office would be everlastingly ruined. But Frank was too much of a brute to listen to this excellent advice; he answered that he would do what he considered his duty, regardless of social recognition or official plums. He answered that his partner in guilt was no worse than he was, and that she loved him; he also had the audacity to fly in the face of society and our improved order of civilization, by declaring himself unfit to marry a pure woman. Furthermore, he stated that he didn't consider the child to blame for being a bastard, and didn't understand why he should be kicked and cuffed about on that account. It will be readily seen that Frank was a dangerous enemy to public orders; had he looked into the matter right, he would have seen that a child who had no more judgment than to be born outside of wedlock ought to be deserted by its father, raised in a county poor-house, and slurred upon every possible occasion, to prevent its repeating the offense, and to act as a wholesome warning to other infants who intend trying their fortunes in this humane world. But Frank could not understand these



things; he was one of those blind, reckless, individuals, who cared so little for the delicate opinions of his neighbors and friends, that he would trample the said opinions into the dust to do what he thought he ought to. He politely announced that he intended to do as much as possible to retrieve his past, and to right the wrongs of those whom he had injured. The friends and neighbors answered this defiance with one equally terrible—they wouldn't call—they'd be d—d if they would.

But in spite of this fearful decision, the Hattons got along very well. Frank's crops prospered, his stock increased, and he carefully saved his money. Sallie was industrious and economical, and her hens became celebrated far and wide as egg producers. She raised chickens, ducks, garden-stuff, and berries; she read books and stories to her boy, and played with and sang to him. Her time was nearly all her own, for the neighbors kept good their resolve not to visit with her—that is nearly all of them—there were two exceptions. Hetty Ann Bales and Gessia Solomon decided in their own hearts that it was no worse for them to visit such women as Sallie for the purpose of encouragement and friendship, than it was for their husbands to visit them for the purpose of crime. So they flew in the face of all decency—so the neighbors said—by going over occasionally, and chatting a half hour with Sallie. Of course they had to do this in defiance of their husbands' wishes, for a man does not relax his watch upon his wife because there are a few irregularities in his own record.

Jakie Hatton improved fast under his mother's teaching, and at the time he was eight years old was started to the district school. He was reading fluently in the Second Reader, was a master-hand at figures, and it might also be added that his muscular abilities were not to be "sneered at." He was built with the heavy, burly form of his father, lightened by all the quickness and agility of his mother. His father had often engaged with him in mimic combats, just for the purpose of enlivening a weary hour, and Jakie had developed so much skill from these encounters, that, without having the slightest knowledge of the fact, he was an amateur boxer to be respected if not feared.

The school-boys did not like the presence of Jakie in their midst. Their parents had mourned loudly in their



hearing of the day when that "mess of a child" should start to school along with their immaculate children. So they mentally "sized up" the stranger, voted him slow, and decided that he would be easily disposed of. But of course it would never do to "lick" a boy on general principles; some sort of occasion must be waited for. Jakie knew nothing of this enmity; he was petted at home, and he naturally expected to be treated well at school. Those who know nothing of ill-treatment do not expect it. So during the recesses of his first day at school, Jakie was very friendly with the boys of his size, divided his two apples with them, and helped two of them add their sums. The day passed in triumph for Jakie, and in the evening he returned joyfully to his mother. On the next day, however, things did not progress so smoothly. On the evening of the day when Jakie had made his advent, Tommy Ransom had announced to his parents that there was a new scholar, named Jakie Hatton. His mother, Mrs. Ida Jane Ransom, had thereupon indignantly ordered him not to notice the little upstart; and if the stranger ever presumed to notice him, for him, Tommy, to "up and tell him who he was." Now Tommy Ransom, owing perhaps to the wealth of his father and the new seal-skin sacque of his mother, was held in great repute; and if he saw fit to call any child less favored by fortune, an epithet which reflected upon the good name of his mother, no one felt at liberty to resist it. Why should they? It was Tommy Ransom who said it, and a proud free American is occasionally found who will cringe a little before wealth. But no one must call Tommy that. He could use the epithet—which seemed to have a noble ring in the ears of the carefully reared pupils of the Boulder Creek school—as much as he liked, and could direct it to whom he pleased, and it had no sting, because Tommy Ransom, who wore a brown velvet suit and red embroidered stockings, said it. Boys might call other boys that, but it was understood throughout the school that that epithet was never to be applied to Tommy. Ike had specially instructed Tommy that he was never to take that name off of any one. No man is more ready to fight, or to go to law about some insignificant slur upon his wife, mother, or sister, than he who had slurred or seduced his neighbor's wife, mother, or sister. It makes no difference to him what becomes of his neighbor's female relatives, provided



his own are kept spotless, and he proposes to keep them so, if he can possibly spare time from the spoliation of his neighbor's household to do so.

Tommy Ransom was so confident of covering himself with glory in an engagement with Jakie Hatton that he could scarcely await the desired occasion. He was two years older than Jakie and some larger, and Jakie looked so weak, even if he was large for his age. Tommy finally succeeded in arranging his person so as to have it run against by Jakie, and then at last the occasion was there. He wheeled off and hurled his favorite epithet at Jakie with all the concentrated insult he could bundle into his tone. Jakie did not know what to do. He had no idea of a fight, and since he had never had children for his companions, he did not know the meaning of the insult. But he had inherited a good share of independence, and the taunt in the tone aroused him. The idea of returning the compliment suggested itself, and he acted thereon.

"You're one yourself!" he shouted.

Tommy's home teaching rushed into his mind and the hot blood into his cheek.

"I'm going to whale hell out of you, if you don't take that back," he shrieked, as he charged upon the doughty little fellow. He jerked off his coat and threw it over his shoulder to his group of seconds—for all the boys were his seconds—and then advanced with up-raised fist. Jakie received him with great coolness; he hardly understood what all this meant, but he saw danger to himself in Tommy's eye, and he remembered the excellent turns he had learned in the mimic fights with his father. He was wonderfully cool and collected.

"O, you want to wrastle do you?" he said, as Tommy advanced. "Well, I know how, but just wait till I get my coat off;" and he drew his coat and gave it a toss. He had already received one blow, and Tommy was squaring himself to give him another, already gloating over the expectation of his easily-won victory.

"I'm going to pound the life out of you!" yelled Tommy; but when he went to sink his blow, he received one in the chest from he knew not where, which turned him heels over head. He did not understand this, and as he gathered himself up, he thought there must be some mistake. So with anger and wonder high within him, he ad-



vanced upon the astonished Jakie, more impetuously and less judiciously than before. Then another mighty left-hander took effect in his side, and again he went heels over head.

"Say now," said Jakie, earnestly, "I've wrestled enough, and you'd better let me alone. You can't wrestle, and I'm 'fraid I'll hurt you." The peeled face and bleeding nose of Tommy were good evidence that Jakie's fears were well founded. But Tommy was not yet ready to accept the true diagnosis of the case. He could not but believe that Jakie's success was accidental; if he were to be vanquished, where was the good of his father being wealthy, or of his mother having a seal-skin sacque? He once more rallied to the charge. Jakie grew red in the face.

"Say, now, *you*," he said. "You let me be; you can't wrestle, and you'll get hurt," and Jakie began to back off.

"I'll bust yer head wide open!" screamed Tommy, as he rushed furiously up with both fists clenched and with blood and perspiration streaming from his face. But Jakie was quite as impregnable in his way as was the Macedonian Phalanx. He had received Tommy's charge with comparative mildness before, but now he was getting tired of the affray, and he decided to bring it to a close. So he made a feint with his right hand, received Tommy on his left, and then brought back his right across Tommy's ruffled waist, with a force that laid him sick and white at the victor's feet.

"Say now," said Jakie, angrily, "I want you to quit. Pa said he didn't want me to wrestle at school."

"I'm goin' to tell the teacher on you, and I'll tell Pa too," sobbed Tommy, with a tone that proclaimed the battle ended.

Of course, all the other boys, large and small, agreed to help tell the teacher; and Jakie, seeing that public opinion was against him, turned away, walked sullenly home, and gravely told his mother all about the boy who would wrestle when he didn't want to. Tommy also hastened to tell his story in maternal ears. Mrs. Ransom had just returned from visiting in town, and was now turning away from the glass where she had been trying the effect of a different bonnet with her new sacque. Ike sat near by, looking half disgusted with the world in general, when Tommy rushed in, covered with dust and blood.



"What's the matter?" shrieked Ida Jane.

"Why, that Jake Hatton called me a nasty name, and then jumped onto me and licked me, and I never done a thing to him—not a thing!"

"Oh dear," moaned Ida Jane, "I was afraid that would be the way of it."

"Why didn't you thrash him good?" blurted out Ike.

"Why—I—did—have—a big notion to;" sobbed Tommy.

"Ike, I wish you'd go right over and see Frank Hatton, and make him cowhide that boy," said the mother, as she began to wipe away the dirt and gore. But Ike did not immediately answer. He was a brave and fearless man—not afraid of anything at all—but his memory was exceedingly good. He remembered that once in the long ago he had had a little misunderstanding with Frank, and had come out of it somewhat worse for the wear. So he sat still and thought, and thought, and thought. Finally he said:

"I think, Ida, that so long as it's only the children, that maybe you'd better go over and talk to her. The buggy is hitched up, and you can tell her that I'll take Frank through the courts, and have that boy sent to the reform-school if he don't behave himself."

Ida Jane was delighted. Of course she would have no trouble, and the visit would give her such an excellent opportunity to tell Sallie just what she thought of her. She could talk freely and unrestrainedly to Sallie, for she was a large, strong woman, while Sallie was a thin little slip of a creature. Then she would wear her seal-skin sacque; she would show Sallie the awful dignity of the person whom her son had assailed. So it happened that she knocked at Mrs. Hatton's door just as Jakie was finishing his sketch of the campaign. His report had been full, clear, and correct, and had occupied some time in the telling. Upon hearing the knock, Sallie opened the door and said simply: "Good evening, Mrs. Ransom." The two women knew each other by sight, but had never before spoken to each other. Mrs. Ransom did not return the greeting.

"Mrs. Hatton," she said, severely, "your boy there, called my boy a nasty name and then beat him shamefully."

"I didn't do that way, Missus. Your boy called me



that first, and then I told him he was one hisself, and he started the wrastlin’,” spoke up Jakie, vehemently.

“Be still, Jakie; sit down, Mrs. Ransom,” said Sallie.

“No; I won’t sit down *here*; Mr. Ransom says he’ll put your husband through the courts, and that he’ll send that boy to the reform-school if he don’t take that back.”

“I don’t believe that your husband will do anything of the sort, Mrs. Ransom, however much he may want to. I’m trying to raise that boy right. He doesn’t know anything about such talk as that, and never heard that name until your boy called him that to-night. Of course it was wrong in him even then, but he had just as good a right to say it as your boy had. Run out doors and play, Jakie.”

Mrs. Ransom turned white. “You don’t mean what you say, Sal Hatton,” she shrieked, losing her self-control. “You are what my boy said—if he did say it—and nobody can open their mouths to say a word against my character.”

“If I am what you say, Jane,” said Sallie, quietly, “Your husband is the dog that made me one. You cannot deny that.”

“Why didn’t you take care of yourself then? You know men will fool girls if they get a chance.”

“I know *your* man did; I know that he is a seducer and a liar.”

“Sal Hatton, I’ll mash your face!”

“And here’s another thing, Jane,” went on Sallie, quietly; “I have been a bad girl, I know, but I’ve changed my way of living, and after all, I’m not doing as badly as you are. I didn’t have to stoop in order to marry; I didn’t have to take a man worse than myself. My husband, faulty as he may have been, was honest—he was neither a seducer nor a liar. You have married a soulless libertine, and have equalized yourself with him. You may be personally clean, but you do not love virtue; your life proclaims that fact.”

Ida Jane started forward in a frenzy and spat in Sallie’s face; but before she could recover her equilibrium, Sallie gave her a fearful slap on one side of the face and then one on the other, to balance her up and keep her level on her feet. Then that the compliment might be fully returned, she raised on tip-toe and spat upon the delicately tinted powder that covered the cheek of Ida Jane.



Sallie was very quick in her movements. Ida Jane saw that the tide of battle was turning against her, but she did not give up; like her son she thought there must be some mistake. She reached for Sallie's ear, but Sallie eluded her and ran into the pantry, from which she soon emerged with a basket of eggs, which she began to fire with wonderful aim. And as egg after egg took effect upon that lovely seal-skin sacque, Ida Jane gave a last despairing wail, and fled. She climbed into the buggy and whipped the horse vehemently until well out of reach of the eggs. When she arrived at home and told her sad story, and helped the hired girl wash the seal-skin sacque with rain water and a soft cloth, and comb it with a fine-tooth comb, she felt that the rewards of virtue are indeed uncertain. And when Ike took down the family Bible to read the evening lesson, he selected that one containing the words, "And I was envious of the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

The next morning, after the school had been called to order, the young lady in charge was surprised to see at the open door, her new pupil in charge of an exceedingly well built, athletic young man.

"Good morning, Miss," said the man, quietly. "I've brought my boy to school, and if it ain't agin your rules I'd like to say a few words, and I'll try to be decent about 'em."

"Certainly, Mr. Hatton," said the teacher.

"Well, it's this. My boy here had trouble with Ransom's boy on the road home last night, because Ransom's boy called him a mean name and struck him. If it's your rules to whip the boys for fightin' why it's all right, and I haven't a word to say. I send my boy to school to learn, and to mind every word you say to him, and if he don't mind you, why, it's all right for you to make him mind; and all I ask is that he has the same treatment as the rest. And now I want to say a word to these boys: my boy isn't to blame for any misfortune he may have; whoever is to blame, he isn't, and I'll not have anything throwed up to him. And if I hear of any little boy here throwing any thing up to my boy, I'll see his father; and if I hear of any big boy trying it, I'll see *him*. I don't want my boy to run over anybody, and I don't intend any one to run over him. And for you, Miss Teacher, I'll say that the boy has learned fast the two days he's been



here; and more than that, he says you're mighty kind and good to him. And I'll say right here, that because you've been kind to that child, that other people think it's smart to mistreat him for what he can't help, that if the time ever comes that you're hard up for friends, why all you'll have to do is to come to Frank Hatton and his wife. Good morning, Miss." And Frank made his bow and left the house.

Jakie was treated wonderfully well after that; respect for his father's muscle did what paternal teaching failed to do for the pupils of the Bowlder Creek school—it caused them to be a little careful to whom they distributed their taunts. The teacher investigated the fight, and decided that since Tommy had been the aggressor that he needed the punishment which he had already received; she therefore resolved to do no whipping. The entire Ransom family had been pummelled by the Hatton family, and it is believed that it did them good. Tommy, at any rate, was much more respectful to his school-fellows afterward.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### A FEMALE TRAMP.

It has been hitherto stated that Gessia Solomon and Hetty Ann Bales occasionally called upon Sallie Hatton for a half hour's chat. Of course, the neighbors were greatly scandalized and "lowed that they wasn't much ahead of Sallie;" but these two women, having lost what they most cared for in their own lives, disregarded the neighbors' opinions. Ike Ransom had at one time felt it his duty to speak to John about this, but John had assured him that although he deeply regretted it, that he could not prevent it, as Gessia was a perfect crank about some things,—had no moral perception whatever.

Sallie was a very likable person; she was kind-hearted and companionable, and never stooped to utter slander—she had received enough of that to understand its stings. Moreover, she made no effort to push herself into good society. She went occasionally to the houses of Gessia



and Hetty Ann, but she always selected hours when their husbands were apt to be away from the house. Aside from sympathy with her misfortunes, Gessia preferred her society to that of the ignorant, coarse-speaking women, who constituted the good society of the neighborhood; for to Gessia, a woman who forgot the duties and sweets of life to study only style, scandal, and lewd jokes was exceedingly repulsive. Sallie, on her part, was remarkably clean in her language. She recognized her period of sin as a fearful mistake, always to be thought upon with horror and tears. Of course, she could never undo it, but she would make the best possible use of that part of her life that remained.

One Saturday afternoon, soon after Mr. De Kalb's visit, Gessia and Hetty Ann sat in Sallie's neat little sitting-room, while little Henry played on the floor. Ralph had been given into the hands of Jakie, who speedily converted him into a horse, and succeeded after some persuasion in getting his whining transformed into a sort of snicker. The clothes-line was conjured into a harness and the tin wash-boiler made to serve as a wagon. The horse for a time became quite gay and kicked up his heels amazingly.

The ladies had been discussing Mr. Blakesly:

"Yes," said Hetty Ann, "a great deal of the old man's goodness comes from the fact that he's allers watchin' himself. He's always lookin' out for any little selfishnesses and meannesses that might take hold of him, and that's why he keeps so clear of 'em. Now, if a person aims to git any ways near perfection, he's got ter keep improvin' himself as long as he lives. Whenever I see a man that has concluded that he's about good enough for this world, I see a man that's in danger. People are safe only when they're movin' onward; if water stands still, it stagnates. Weeds have a way of growin' a heap faster nor good garden truck, and if they ain't kept pulled out they'll choke up the garden and smother the truck; and I've noticed that an old garden could git just as full of weeds as a young one too, if it ain't watched. I've seen lots of people that, as soon as they were grown, thought they had all the raisin' they needed, and the idea that they ort to keep right pullin' weeds out of their characters, never occurred to 'em. They could see the weeds in other folks' characters mighty plain, but law, not in their own. Now there's one idea that ort to be kept growin' in



spite of weeds; and that's this—that other folks have the same rights and feelin's that we have and that they're liable to be pleased with the same kind of favors, and displeased by the same kind of insults that we are. I've seen people that was allers raisin' a fuss about their own rights, that couldn't understand that other folks had a shadder of a right that they ort to respect. Now, there was Bill Prescott as was one of father's neighbors; he was the easiest offended man I ever see—he'd take offense when you meant nothing but kindness; yet he wasn't a mite particular how much nor how often he offended folks. His wife and his children and his niggers and his neighbors, all came in for a share of his meanness, but yet nobody must give him a sassy word. He seemed to carry his sensitiveness around to gauge the amount of meanness he dished out for other people. He went to town once and got drunk, and had to stay in jail all night, and after that I declare I thought he'd talk the neighborhood crazy about personal liberty; yet he locked his wife up in the house once to keep her from going to see her mother that had beek tuck down with eyelisipelas; and once he got mad at one of the niggers and kept him down cellar amongst the rats and the damp for four days, and didn't give him nothin' to eat but corn bread and water. Then Bill's son, Eben, who was mighty like his father, used to be always blattin' round about a feller maulin' him in a fight, and I tell you he could talk mighty purty about the sacredness of the human person: and yet he was always ready, if he was a little mad, to knock one of his sisters down with a club, or to kick blazes out of some feller that hadn't any muscle to speak of. I've found out that the average critters believe in safety and rights and good treatment and liberty for themselves; and that as long as they git plenty of 'em, other folks can slide. But when they've had a few of their own blessin's curtailed they sometimes git waked up a little—I've heered of wonderful changes comin' over people jest that way. When I used to read a good deal, which I ain't done of late years, I got hold of a story of a Russian nobleman who was always sayin' that he didn't see why his serfs orter to be dissatisfied; well bye-and-bye, he fell out with the Emperor, and got sent to Siberia for six years; and after he came he seen things in a mighty sight different of light. He concluded that after all mebbe the serfs had cause for complaint, and then he



up and commenced to work for liberty for 'em. And I've often thought that these 'ere rich people that's allers wonderin' what the poor have to fret about, could be made to see things mighty differently by having to hustle for their grub a month or two.

"Then I've seen other people that couldn't see the misery and sufferin' of their neighbors when it was stuck right under their noses—and like as not them partly to blame for it—that could cry their eyes nearly out over a ten cent novel that told about some fool girl that never did act like she was more'n half witted, or else about some murderin' vilyan that was hung for killin' more people than you could shake a stick at, but that made his peace with the Lord, and got to be mighty good 'fore he died."

"But, Mrs. Bales," said Gessia, "what is to be done? People *won't* see the rights of others. How is the matter to be helped?"

"Well," answered Hetty Ann; "I 'low that there ain't much hope for some folks; there's some folks that won't improve, no matter what happens; they wa'n't trained right when they was children and their selfishness won't come out of 'em now. I've thought mighty often that if people only knew how to train their children—which lots of 'em don't and never will—that this world would be a mighty sight better off. They'll go on and make a heap of noise about somethin' that don't amount to a hill o' beans, and then pass clear around some downright mean thing. Now, I've seen parents that would kick up sich a fuss about their children goin' out to their neighbors and dancin' a little, that you'd think all the commandments had been broken at once; but if them same children would a cheated somebody out of half a dollar they'd a thought it smart. Now as fur as dancin' is concerned, it ain't a bit worse nor singin'. If you sing mean songs, and sing 'em in mean company, they're mighty bad; and if you dance mean dances, and dance 'em in mean company, *they're* mighty bad; but if you sing right and dance right, why the result'll be all right. Dancin' is to walkin' what singin' is to talkin', and one ain't a bit more harm than the other. I don't approve of young people gettin' together and singin' all night—they'd tax their voices; neither do I approve of 'em gettin' together and dancin' all night—they'd tax their strength. But to get together and sing or dance till ten or eleven, or at the most, twelve o'clock,



and then go home and get some rest, no sensible person can object to ; and I think that if jest half the talkin' that parents do agin' dancin', was directed agin meanness and injustice to one another, and underhandedness and tellin' nasty jokes, that things would be a heap better for it. It's jest as nateral for young people to want amusement as 'tis for calves and colts to want to run and kick up their heels ; and if they can't have a good time once in a while at home, or with their parents' consent, why they'll go where they can get it, that's all. If I had my way, the parents would go along to the dances, and if they was too pious to shake their foot, why they could at least sit up and talk and laugh. They'd be seein' what sort o' company their children was in, and not be actin' as sentinels to keep 'em from havin' a little fun. Then some folks that 'most faints at the mention of dancin' will let their children play them nasty kissin' plays, that one single one of 'em'll go further towards ruinin' a young man's taste for decency than a whole winter's dancin' would do. I believe a mighty sight of bad men get so jest from their parents actin' like policemen to 'em 'stead of like companions. Children has got to be made to mind if they ever amount to anything, and the fact is most of 'em ain't made to mind well enough ; but there's right ways and there's wrong ways. People that can't no more control theirselves than they could a team of Numidian lions, will sometimes boss their young ones till they haven't got the spirit of a rabbit for anything but somethin' underhanded and sneakin'. Then some folks jest let their young ones go till they git a third grown 'fore ever they try to make 'em mind, and then when they try to break 'em in, they find that the young ones has got about three times as much will-power as they have, and nearly as much bodily strength. All they can do then is jest to make the children hate 'em, and after that's done, the parent's influence is gone. I tell you a mighty little tap given to a two-year old child, is worth more than half an hour's whippin' to a ten-year old boy. If children was never let get the start, they'd never have it ; and a parent needn't be mean to 'em, either. They could be their companions and playfellows, and them they'd better be, but let 'em know all the time that they know what's best for 'em and expect 'em to act accordin' to it."

"According to your way of thinking, Mrs. Bales, it



would take nearly all of a mother's time to train her children," said Sallie.

"That it would, Miss Hatton," answered Hetty Ann, "that it would. Why if a mother trained a child into all it needed to know, she'd have mighty little time for runnin' around and spinnin' yarns amongst the neighbors. I tell you it makes my flesh creep when I look at a passel of little children and think of the awful things that's liable to happen to 'em from bad trainin'. A mother had better put fewer ruffles onto her children's clothes, and give 'em less pie to eat, and save a little time to tell 'em how they ort to consider their neighbors' rights as well as their own, and how they ort to be kind to them as is in trouble. A child ort to be taught that if its fun is injurin' any human person or any dumb critter, that it ort to stop it. I've seen parents teach children religion without ever hintin' justice and morality to 'em; and as a consequence when the children grew up, they had considerable more religion than they had humanity. They could tell all about the conversion of Saul; but however able they was to do it, their memory wan't good about payin' their debts. And I've noticed that it's mighty often them that's least capable to train children that has the most of 'em. They don't seem to gauge the amount of their responsibility by their capacity to meet it. Then some folks go so much on outside appearances that they teach their boys that if they can wear their hats on one side of their heads, and keep a cigar between their teeth from morning till night, that that's all that's needed to make manliness. And they teach their girls to choose their husbands for their clothes rather than for their characters, and to think that if they can get a blackleg that keeps his pants brushed and wears a canary neck-tie, and has a rich daddy, to be their husbands, that they've done better than if they'd got an honest man that wore a hickory shirt and worked for a living. If they don't exactly teach 'em this, they let 'em learn it, and that's jest as bad in the long run.

"Then I've knowed people to set their own young ones up agin their school-teachers, and other people's up agin their step-mothers, and think they wastakin' the children's part, when in reality they was jest teachin' 'em defiance for law, and gettin' 'em ready for the magistrates to handle. I tell you a child's mind is mighty soft and yieldin', and it's allers ready to pick up a lesson, bad or good. I respect



a woman more that'll let her dishes go, and go out and play black man with her children, than I do one that does up her work ever so nice, and then talks ugly where her children can hear her."

Just here Hetty Ann's remarks were interrupted by the appearance at the door, of a wretched creature wearing a faded silk dress that was both torn and dirty. Her eyes had a wild maniacal stare, and her face shone white and ghastly under the masses of dishevelled hair that fell about her shoulders. Her hat was crushed out of shape and her hands were bare; her appearance was so frightful that all three of the women involuntary rose to their feet, and Sallie shrieked aloud. "Law! Law! Who be you, and what do ye want?" exclaimed Hetty Ann. The woman did not answer; she looked in at them vacantly. Gessia advanced a step toward her and said, "Do you want something to eat?" But there came no answer. Sallie regained her courage and said: "Come in and sit down, and I will bring you some dinner." The woman at last found her voice. "I am not hungry," she said, "but I would like to sit down out of the sun." She sat a few minutes with her restless eyes wandering first to one, and then to another of the startled group. The day was hot and the perspiration stood in beads upon her brow; suddenly her lips darkened, and she reeled and fell to the floor. The women flew to her and began the usual method of restoration, but after half an hour's work succeeded only in bringing back a regular breathing. The stranger lay with her eyes closed and with a faint and irregular pulsation in her thin wrist. Sallie and her guests put her to bed, bathed her, dressed her in a snowy night dress, and smoothed out and braided her long, dark hair.

"Law now, she's been *pretty*!" exclaimed Hetty Ann, as she stood away and looked at her. "I wonder who she is?"

"I know," said Sally, with a torrent of tears.

"Who?" asked Hetty Ann.

"I do not know her name," said Sallie, "but I know her history; it is written in her face."

"Will you let her stay here?" asked Gessia.

"Yes," said Sallie. "She shall stay as long as she likes." Gessia and Hetty Ann busied themselves to make things as comfortable as possible about the stranger until sundown, when they both withdrew, promising to come again



in the morning. The woman slept heavily all night and with the first light of morning awakened.

"Have I stayed here all night!" she asked of Sallie, who was standing watching her.

"Yes," answered Sallie, "and you shall stay as long as you like. Will you have your breakfast now?"

"I thank you. You are a real woman," was the answer; "but I cannot eat. There is something I want to tell you, and then you may not want me in your house; I am a bad woman."

"It is all right," said Sallie, with tears streaming down her face. "You shall stay."

"The world isn't quite so bad as I thought it—it has one merciful heart in it at least," said the woman.

"It has more than that: there will soon be good friends here to help nurse you; now let me get you some toast and eggs."

"No; thank you. I cannot eat," said the woman, as she dropped back on her pillow. She soon slept heavily, and Sallie attended to her morning duties. Frank had such great faith in the Blakeslys that he proposed to start for them at once, and at the same time bring out a physician. Sallie went to the bed-room and aroused the woman. "I am going to send for a doctor," she said; but the woman did not understand; she relapsed into her heavy sleep.

By ten o'clock the Blakeslys and the doctor entered the room, where Hetty Ann, Gessia, and Sallie were attending the stranger. The latter had awakened and lay white and still. The doctor's examination and report were alike brief; she was suffering from exhaustion and exposure to the heat, and there was little hope of her recovery. He left a few simple remedies, and took his departure.

Sallie advanced and smoothed her guest's pillow. "Here are a good man and woman that helped me a great deal; and now they have come to talk to you," she said as she propped the stranger's head up with pillows.

The Blakeslys came forward and shook hands. "My sister," said Mrs. Blakesly, as if she were talking to a confidential friend, "I am sorry to see you sick. I hope that the pure morning air will help you." Tears flowed down the woman's cheek; all the women sobbed, and Jakie cried because his mother did. "Would you like to talk?" continued the pastor's wife,



"Yes," said the woman, "if my strength holds out, I wish to talk—to tell my story. Please raise my head a little more." And then with the return of strength that so often precedes dissolution, she began :

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE STORY OF EMILY SPANGLER.

"My name," she said, "is Emily Spangler. I was raised in the country, in New York State, but when my education was far enough advanced my mother sent me to a large town to graduate. I worked for my board, and studied so hard that I took class honors. Mother was a widow and poor, and it took all we could raise to pay for my books and outfit; so after it was over we had to be extra careful, as the rent was back on mother's house, and one of the cows unpaid for. I intended to teach, but the schools did not last through the summer, so we had to do the best we could till fall. We made a good deal of butter, but it was so plentiful that season that the price was low. I was not ashamed to sell butter, but I did not like to take less than it was worth. So one day when I was in a store in town, trying to dispose of an eight-pound lot, I grumbled because the price was so low. The man offered me only twelve and one-half cents a pound for it, and our butter was extra nice. I had seen a young man and a middle aged woman talking together in the back of the store, and presently the woman came forward and asked to look at the butter. She pronounced it fine, and said that if I'd go to her house with her to get the money, that she'd give me twenty cents a pound for it. Then she called to the man she had been talking to, and told me that there was a young man that would carry the pail for me, and I could walk along with her and be saved all trouble. She was a nice looking woman, and of course I didn't think of danger. I walked along with her, and the grocer, who must have known her, never said a word. We came to a nice house, and she left me in a splendidly furnished parlor a few minutes. Then she came in and told me in a very friendly manner that her money was upstairs, and that if I liked to



walk along up, that it would give me a chance to get a fine view of the city. We went up a broad stairway, then into a hall, and from that into a small room. It had only one window, and that one was covered with a heavy shutter, and although it was day time the room would have been quite dark but for a light in a lamp which hung from the high ceiling. I learned afterward that the window opened into a court on the roof and that it had another shutter on the outside so that there was not the slightest chance for the sound of a scream to reach the street. Before I had had time to look around me, I noticed that the woman had slipped out of the room, and that the man who had carried my pail was in the room locking the door.

“ ‘Why did that woman go away?’ I asked quickly, for I began to be frightened. ‘She left you to *me*,’ he said, with the most devilish smile I ever saw. I used to imagine that fiends smiled like that. Then he went on to tell me what kind of a house I was in, and promised me that if I’d give up to the first man they sent into the room that I should have a lot of money and be treated well; but that if I refused, I would have to give up to him. I told him that I’d die before I gave up to any man, and I snatched up a chair and struck at the lamp, and told him that I’d burn us both up; but he caught the chair and wrested it away from me so furiously that he lamed my wrist so I couldn’t use my hand for days. I prayed aloud to God to protect me, and because he did not, I have cursed him ever since. I believe that the Devil has a thousand empires of power where God has one. I lay on the floor in that room all night; it was dark, for he put out the light when he left me, and I was glad of it; I felt as if I never wanted to see light again. I sobbed and cursed all night and all the morning of the next day. I refused to eat a bite they brought me, and I wouldn’t have taken so much as a drink of water to save my life. And in the morning that dog came to my room, where I was locked in like a felon in a cell, and opened my door and taunted me with what I was, and laughed at my sobs. But about noon some one came and unlocked my door and came softly in; it was a woman, and she was crying. She came up and laid her hand on my head and broke out crying afresh; she whispered to me to be very quiet and she would save me. She had some clothing on her arm, and she told me to change mine for that. She said:



“‘I have heard all about you from the mistress, and you are not to blame for what has happened; but this is a dog’s life, and don’t you consent to live it. I am here against my will, but everybody knows me, and it’s too late for me to change. Every man in town knows who I am, and my shame will follow me always. But you can go back to your mother, and maybe you can get evidence enough to prosecute. Put on these things and tie a veil over your face, and I’ll make them think you are one of the girls until we get into the street, and then you are safe.’ And when she laid out the things, hope came back to me, and I was soon dressed. I threw my arms around her and thanked her, and then we left the room and walked along the hall to the head of the stairs. But just as we got there, there was that wretch coming up. ‘Who is that with you, Hat?’ he asked, savagely.

“‘It’s Kitty,’ she said, quietly. ‘Her eyes are weak, you know, so I told her to tie a veil over her face. We are going walking; won’t you come along?’

“‘Hat Duggan!’ he shrieked; ‘you’re a d—d liar! That’s the new girl you’re trying to sneak off. I can see through your tricks!’

“‘Run for the street!’ whispered Hat to me. But he jerked me back and raised his hand and struck her—I saw him do it—he struck her on the head, and she reeled and fell, and rolled to the bottom of the stairs, and lay at the foot of the staircase with her face all cut and bleeding. I turned my face away, for the sight made me sick; but he caught me by the shoulders and wheeled me round, and told me to look and remember well, for that was what I’d get if I didn’t behave myself. Then he dragged me back to the room, and cuffed me about, and tried to make me drink some wine and eat some food; but I would not, and told him that I’d starve myself. He cursed me and went down stairs then, and I was left alone for a while. But pretty soon the mistress came up and brought some food, and told me that if I was determined not to live that way, that she would let me off. She said for me to eat something, so I’d have strength to walk, and she’d take me outside the city limits in her carriage, and then I could get out and go home. I believed her, so I ate some food, and then combed my hair and arranged my dress. But I was beginning to feel sleepy, and I told her so. She told me to get my hat on and be ready to drive, and then she left me.



After she went away I got so sleepy that I had to walk the floor and slap my face to keep awake; and though I couldn't think much, I began to suspect that she'd tricked me and put some drug in my food. When I thought of that, I tried harder than ever to keep awake; I had almost given up when the door opened, and three young men came into the room. They were well dressed, but their clothes showed that they had been on a long debauch. The very air was dreadful with the fumes of liquor from their breath. I began to scream, and then they laughed aloud, and as the full horror and hopelessness of my position came over me my senses left me. I was abused horribly all night, and by morning I'd lost my self-respect. I saw that the world was all against me, and that the Devil had me and was marching me straight off to Hell. It was too late to save my honor, so I ate my breakfast when it was sent up to me, and then I tried to think. Then the wretch that helped trick me into coming there, came up, and some of my independence came back.

"Do you belong to this house?" I asked.

"Yes?" he answered; "I tend to getting girls for the house, and I tend bar and so on."

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" I asked. "Why can't you be respectable?"

"Respectable?" he said, and then he laughed loud and long. "Why girl," he said, "it's the respectable young men that keep the business up. If it wasn't for them we wouldn't have to set traps for pretty, dainty creatures like yourself. Take the toughs now, and they're satisfied with anything; but your respectable fellows demand new, fresh girls, that haven't been in use long, and we've got to supply 'em or lose trade."

"That house was in a city that boasted its large number of elegant churches, and many of the members of the board of alderman who licensed it, were Christians. They say they license them for the protection of women. It is just as reasonable to talk about setting a wheat field on fire to protect it from the drouth. Men encourage their vicious nature at such places till they are worse than wild beasts; and the more chance there is for such indulgence the more unsafe women will be. Every art of force, trickery, and lying, that can escape the almost worthless laws on the subject, are employed to keep these houses full of women, and the Christian signs his name to the brothel license, and



before his pen is dry, he writes an affectionate letter to his own carefully-shielded daughter.

“Well, I stayed on. Finally they’d let me go out to walk; but it was written in my face what I was, and fine ladies would hold their dresses away from me, as if my touch was poison. And many a time I have met young men that visited me regularly, walking with nice ladies, and of course they wouldn’t notice me. Oh, it seems unjust; I cannot see why, even if I had sinned willingly, that I was worse than they, and yet I never, never sinned willingly, never. People might say I did sin willingly, because I gave up, and let things take their course; but it was not so; I was ruined, and I had to take to that life or kill myself, and I couldn’t do that, with the shame on me. Those young men called themselves honorable, but I am branded with a stain that all the rivers of earth can not wash away. I have heard preachers talk about the justice of God, and say that punishment came only to those who in some way invited it. It is mockery. Was I to blame because God made me weak, and then refused to protect me? Was I to blame because I could not resist that man’s brutal strength? Was I to blame because I wanted to sell that butter to help pay mother’s rent? Poor dear mother! I never heard of her again. I couldn’t face her or let her know, and I hope she died supposing me dead. Yes, the greatest comfort I could have, would be to know that she is dead and out of this hellish world.

“Finally I came out here, and got work, and decided to change my ways; but it got noised abroad what I was, and I lost my place, and had to go back. I have been in one of the houses in Cedar Ridge ten months; and during that time I’ve drugged myself twice to put end to my miserable life; but both times they came to my room and unlocked the door, for the mistress always kept duplicate keys; they dragged me out of the room, took me to the ball-room of the house, and walked me up and down the floor, and whipped me with a buggy whip to get me out of the stupor; and young society men, who came regularly to see me, would stand by and laugh and shout to the bartender who was whipping me:

“‘Lay it on to her, Doc; we can’t spare her yet.’ I asked Doc once, after they’d brought me out of a stupor, what he thought I wanted to live for, and he swore fearfully, and said that he’d just see that I didn’t die—that



girls were too scarce in the mining camps, and the demand too great to spare a single one. The other day I wandered away resolved to die in the hills, but by some chance—I know not what—I arrived at this house.

“It was the will of God and not chance, my sister, that directed you here, where this loving woman waited to receive you,” said the minister, as the tears flowed down his cheeks. “Let us pray for the peace that He giveth to His beloved.”

“The peace you speak of will never come to me in this world,” she said, “and I do not expect it in another. All my life I have heard of justice and of the rewards of virtue, and yet I have met only injustice, insult, outrage, and hopeless misery. If the same beings—one class who abandon and another who destroy—who dwell upon earth are to inhabit heaven, I can hope for nothing better there. They call this the land of the free and the home of the brave,” she said, with bitter emphasis, “and yet in this country that boasts its liberty, its justice, its gallantry, and its equitable laws, when I raised my voice for help, in a house licensed and sanctioned by law, I found not an ear to give a pitying hearing to my cry, and not a hand raised to save or to protect. To dozens of men who have visited me and tortured me with their foul, hated love, I have told my story, and each and every one of them laughed at me, and said that every old hussy had some pitiful tale to tell. And I suppose that if their country had been in danger, that nearly every one of those young men would have risen like firebrands, to burn out and destroy her enemies; but their countrywomen, writhing in forced shame, and crushed under the feet of social despots, must cry to deaf ears. Many men to whom I have told my story, have taunted me, and said that women like this life, and would not leave it if they could. I have seen a few women that did. There are natural female criminals as well as natural male criminals, and I cannot see why one class is better than the other. But the majority of them came from the ordinary walks of life, and fell, not from love of sin, but from too much love of the unfaithful, and too little moral courage. Talk about women of even ordinary refinement liking brutal familiarity, coarse contempt, and open scorn! I have talked with hundreds of these women, and nearly all of them became bad from lies, deceit, or force; and all but the coarsest ones would leave the life for any honest employ-



ment if they could get it; and if they could not get work they would leave it for the grave if they dared. And this last is generally what they come to—for worn out with shame, and hopelessness, and despair, and taunted to desperation by the brutal jests and the foul names their tyrants hurl at them, they at last almost invariably suicide. I have seen little girls from twelve to fifteen years of age, coaxed and tricked into those houses, and have seen them dragged out and buried in nameless graves before they were eighteen—dead of shame, abuse, and disease, before they had reached the legal age of acting for themselves. This is how the beneficent law protects the women and children of the republic.

“I have argued with young men on this matter, and they say that were it not for the houses of ill repute they would have no amusement. Have the arts by which the ancient Greeks maintained their bodily strength lost their attraction? Must leaping, wrestling, racing, and fencing—amusements that make bodies strong—be forgotten for vices that weaken and destroy them? Have music, architecture, the rare cunning of mechanics, painting, rhetoric, oratory, skill in gunning or archery, rowing, and the thousand generous delights of the hand and mind, to yield their excellence to an unnecessary and weakening vice? I have studied science, and I believe that a trait can be bred out of, or into, a race or class; I fear that our much-lauded Republic is breeding into her citizens that which will be her destruction. All that humanity has to depend on as a source of noble citizens is its homes, and these are fast becoming tainted with this national evil. But why should I worry, why should I shed these tears over a country that has refused me protection? That openly approves the licensing of houses for the continuance of my shame? Alas, there is no hope! The grave is almost ready and I wish that I were there asleep.”

She leaned back on her pillow; her eyes were open and staring wildly. Mr. Blakesly came forward, with hands clenched and face contorted.

“My sister,” he said, “the hand of affliction has indeed been heavy upon you, but the hour of your release is near at hand. Let us pray.”

“No,” she answered quietly; “I will not pray. I called on the Lord to save me from being a thing of scorn, and he would not. His ears are deaf when I cry, and I



will trouble him no more. Young men who have added to my list of shame, and who have laughed my story to scorn, have reformed, joined the church, and some of them have become leading members; let them pray and let him listen. He has long ago given me over to ruin and despair and I will not ask him for the protection he has so long denied."

"Oh dear, *dear* sister!" wailed the minister, as he wrung his great hands, "Look up! look up! the ways of Providence are too dark and too mysterious for us to understand them. The burden of sorrow which has crushed you here, may entitle you to a seat on the right hand of God, and to wear a crown resplendent with the jewels of truth. We can not always see the outcome of the sorrow that is forced upon us. You refuse to pray because you say you distrust God; but it is not so. Your distrust is only for the shallow, unfeeling God, that is preached by this shallow, unfeeling age. It is loathing for the Christian who signs his name to a license for a brothel; it is scorn for the sons of Christian mothers, who helped to sink your good name; it is contempt for the social status that forgives the strong and crushes the weak. But that very hatred of wrong and injustice is in itself veneration for the Most High God; it is impossible for you to blaspheme while such divine sentiments are regnant in your heart; it takes infinitely more than words to show the love or hatred of the Almighty One.

"Humanity is a fearfully slow growth, and a man who has not been led in ways of righteousness is far more dangerous than a wild beast; for he has reason with which to plan horrible deeds, and hands to assist in their execution. Humanity has just now reached the point where reason is wrestling to gain a balance of power with physical strength; where justice is battling with the customs of ages. Many of my fellow ministers are no longer serving God by laboring for his creatures; they are toadying to wealth and power instead of battling for souls. While they, with cold words, are painting the crucifixion of one who labored among the humble, they forget that humanity is now struggling upon the cross, and crying wildly for succor. They forget that power and strength are driving nails into the bleeding hands and lashing the writhing bodies with thongs. The ears of power are deaf to the shrieks of despair, and madly he gloats over the enjoy-



ment he wrings from the shamed, suffering, dying oppressed. But though he is blind to suffering and deaf to groans, yet there is one who sees and hears; the God of improvement, the Lord of justice, who was mighty enough to keep the earth whirling through space until shapeless little masses of nerves and watery flesh, floating aimlessly, yet wondrously guided through the waste of waters, became men endowed with reason and thought—he hears every cry, and sees the shedding of every drop of innocent blood. He does not attempt the jugglery of changing the good into the bad or the bad into the good; his creatures have improved themselves from mere bones and flesh to temples of intelligence; but because such vast works must of necessity go on slowly, we lose hope and say that men have ceased to improve—that they will never entirely lose the characteristics that dwelt in their ancestors, when they devoured and destroyed, and made the primeval forests dismal with their tyranny. But largely by their own brutality have they educated themselves out of their brutality; for the better ones among them looked upon horrible things and said: ‘This is wrong; it is unjust to others.’ And they found sympathizers—few at first, but more as time rolled on, until there were enough to put down the wrong which had attracted attention. And when this work goes on too slowly, *He* says, ‘improve,’ and at once arises a teacher, who, filled with the thoughts of God, leads his creatures onward. And when at last shall come God’s age of peace and justice, which shall only be brought about by the creatures whom he bids improve themselves, it will be found that the stake, the cross, and the shackle will have done their part; not because—as the bigoted and blinded tyrants who employed them supposed—they ridded the earth of heretics, but because they exalted martyrs, who earned for humanity freedom of conscience and freedom of speech. And the martyrs thus exalted gave to posterity examples of lofty courage, heroism under trial, and fortitude in standing by the right, that are brighter than the flame of fagots, higher than the loftiest cross, and more enduring than the iron shackle. Posterity has glorified them, and has given them sweet revenge over the callous brutes who made them suffer.

“The cry of the helpless, though all around seem deaf, is never lost; though it fall upon desert sands, my God will take it up and waft it to some pitying heart, which



will, in its turn, cry out, until the echoes waken a legion for the defense of right. Men have dropped unknown into the nameless graves of a thousand battles, knowing that no monuments would rise and no songs be sung to their memory, merely that their own or their neighbors' children, might breathe a little more of the air of freedom. In this battle with the world you have gone down, and your victors are shouting and exultant; but your story, told even in these few ears, may echo and re-echo until it becomes a thunder-peal to blast the designs of the brutal strong, and cheer on the hearts of the fainting weak. That echo may yet sound until it instigates the enactment of laws that will render woman safe and men pure. It may yet stir the waves of public opinion until they become too hot to hold alive such villains as you have described. As for the Christian council you mentioned, and the indifference of churches, I have this to say: Thousands of ministers had far rather argue over a creed than save a soul. And what is creed? It is merely a network of confusion held before our eyes to blind us to our duty, and make us forget the cry of the helpless. Is the Lord, my God, in need of my labor to protect his holy name? Ah, no. He is great enough and glorious enough to protect himself! But I am his servant, and his creatures need my ministrations. If I refuse to listen to their cry that I may have more time to praise my Master, I am like the general who sits in his tent, praising the name of his country, while the battle is being lost. When I see a man who is toiling for the children of my Master, I know he is the servant of the true God, and I will give him my hand and call him brother, even if he bow down to an image of stone. There is but one true God, and he is the God of love and pity, and the Lord of justice; and what does it matter by what name his servants call him, so long as they, like Jesus of Nazareth, toil for the children of their Master in heaven?

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," said the old man, as he stretched out his great hands, and raised his streaming eyes. "Oh, if all the Christian ministers, from the time of the Redeemer until now, had preached and studied that one text instead of wrangling about creed, all the fagots that have consumed the bodies of saints would have burned only to warm the chilled limbs of the poor; all the ovens that destroyed the hapless Vandois would have baked bread for the hungry; all the prisons would



have been homes; the swords and armor would have been instruments of tillage; and all the shamed, lost women, would have been loved wives, clasping little prattling babes in their arms. The echo of your story may yet be as a mighty battle-cry in the war which is to be fought—the war that will surely be waged for the sanctity of the home. Again, I beg you, let us pray. Let us beseech the God of advancement that he once more say unto his creatures, ‘Advance.’”

The tramp upon the bed was rapidly sinking; she moved her purple lips and said simply, “Pray;” and amid the groans of the brute, the bitter tears of the strumpet, the agony of the crank’s wife, the silent weeping of the foggy, and the wild sobs of the fool, there arose from the lips of the crank, a heart-felt prayer for wronged, suffering humanity. And when it was over, it was found that the angel of death, unafraid of soiling his white pinions in such company, had entered, and had unlocked the prison doors that held captive the soul of Emily Spangler; and the white face, with its record of wrongs, insults and sad indignities, took on the settled calm of endless peace.

Had the assemblage that gathered round the dead been composed of cool-headed, sensible people, they would of course have seen the necessity of what had passed; they would have recognized the demands and needs of a broad, generous civilization, and would have ceased to worry about the matter. But being a set of blinded, fanatical and unreasonable cranks, they failed to see any necessity about it, and declared the whole affair to be an outrage. They shed many a tear over the still clay, and the women tenderly arrayed it for the grave. Sallie contributed snowy underclothing, Gessia brought a white dress, and Hetty Ann, with her face bathed in tears for the death of fond hopes, took from a little box in an old leather trunk, the white silk gloves, and the lace she had worn at her wedding. They were white no longer—they were yellow with time, but were scrupulously clean, and gave a sweet perfume from the herbs that for years had been folded into them to keep out the moths. She carefully shook out the little bits of leaves from their folds, and tenderly arranged them upon the bride of death. Frank purchased a plain coffin; and in the early morning of the next day, while the breeze from the hills was cool and sweet, Frank and his hired man lifted the coffin into the farm wagon,



and with the hired man driving, the little procession started for the city cemetery. Frank, Sallie, and Gessia followed in the spring-wagon. The Hattons did not wish their boy to learn of shame and sorrow so early in his life; so when the woman had begun to tell her sad story he had been sent out to take little Ralph Solomon for a walk among the plum-trees; and upon the day of the funeral, as that took place upon Monday, he had been sent to school. The Blakeslys joined the group at town; they occupied the back seat of the spring-wagon. There was a good deal of amusement among the citizens of Milroy City as the little procession passed through the streets, as it must do to reach the cemetery. A great majority of the loungers had heard the woman's story, as Mr. Blakesly had rehearsed it to some of the members of his church the day before in an effort to get a few contributions to help Frank pay for the coffin, in which he was of course unsuccessful. He offered some of the money that was to buy his winter coat, but Frank explained that he was doing well, and needed no help. There was also a good deal of indignation when the face of Mrs. John Solomon was recognized. Several men confidentially informed their friends that they would make a wife leave home for doing such a thing. The idea of a woman who had any self-respect, and who was the wife of a respectable man, sitting alongside of that Hatton woman, going to a grave-yard to help bury another —. The idea of a woman having no more sense than to believe the story that such a thing would tell! They'd show her, d—n her. John Solomon hadn't any spunk, to let a woman run over him like that. To be sure, there had been a slight tempest in the Solomon household concerning the attendance at this same burial. Upon the evening after the death, Gessia had told John the woman's story, and had detailed the arrangements for the burial. John had looked anxiously at her, and said: "You won't go, will you, Gessia?"

"Yes, John, it is my intention," she said, quietly.

"O Gessia, you are getting so you have no judgment at all; the chances are that the woman lied to you; but even if she did not, and was really wronged, why, after all, she was a fallen woman, and you'll be talked about if you go to see her buried."

"I do not care who talks nor how much they talk,"



said the wife, quietly; "I have learned to care more for humanity than for society."

"What will you do with the children?"

"I can take them along."

"No, leave them with me. I will take care of them. I do not want it thrown up to them that they went to see such a woman buried."

Gessia turned toward him as if she intended to speak, but her lips remained unmoved. She could not understand such feelings as this man had. The truth was that both of them were mistaken in their estimates of each other's characteristics; at the time of their marriage, John had believed that Gessia was an ordinary woman, and Gessia had believed that John was an extraordinary man. Such mistakes are very serious ones.

John withdrew his spoken opposition to Gessia's attendance at the burial, rather than discuss the topic which seemed somehow to have lost some of its attractiveness; but he was very angry. He kept the children at home and remained in a gloomy humor all the forenoon.

Emily Spangler was buried "with the county." Frank placed at the head of the mound a little wooden tablet upon which Gessia wrote with pencil the name, date, and a sweet verse of her own making. This tablet soon disappeared; the mound sunk to a level with the surrounding ground, and as time rolled on the little clumps of gama-grass grew and flourished. But in another quarter of the same inclosure arose an elegant double monument to a father and son who had amassed a large fortune keeping a dance-house.

The cause of Hetty Ann Bales's absence from the funeral was the declaration on the part of Josiah, that if she did go, he would kick her out of the house and see that she never came in it again; which every one will admit was strong argument in favor of absenting herself.

The neighbors sadly shook their heads, and voted that it was all very bad; they had thought that "mebbe Sally was tryin' to do better, but when she took that old hussy in, and let her stay there till she died, and waited on her like she was a lady, it looked like she hadn't changed much. And it looked like John Solomon's wife wasn't much better; she was there, helpin' round, and then rode in the same seat with Sallie goin' to the grave-yard. And old Miss Bales—but then she was nobody, anyhow,



## CHAPTER XIV.

### A HOME-COMING.

GESSIA returned from the funeral a little before noon; the sun had been hot, and she was weary and dejected. The little boys ran to her as if a prison had opened for their release, dancing about her and climbing upon her lap as soon as she was seated. She kissed and petted them, and then after a few minutes put them down to begin her preparations for dinner. John sat with a heavy cloud on his face, and answered his wife's remarks in a decidedly surly manner.

"I think, Gessia, that when you come to think over what you've done, that even you will be sorry," he said at last.

"Why, John?" she asked, quietly.

"Why, even if all she said was true, even then she's got a bad name, and people will talk about you in a way that you know nothing about, for going to that funeral. I wouldn't have had it happen for anything. The idea of people throwing up to me that my wife went to see a — buried."

Gessia gave an agonized scream; "I have read," she began, as soon as she could control her voice, "how the Romans used every art of trickery and force to bring weaker nations into subjection; and when they had succeeded, and their captives were completely crushed and bowed under the yoke, they completed their tyranny by taunting their helpless victims with the name of slave. It is just so men treat us. They use the arts of trickery, deception, endearment, flattery, or force, to accomplish our ruin, and then after their devilish work is done they hiss in our ears a far worse name than slave."

"Oh, well, Gessia, you won't admit that hardly any women are bad of themselves."

"I do admit it. While there are such fathers for them it is wonderful that so many have escaped inheriting those traits as have."

"Oh yes, you will go on about men. You won't reason. Now take a good woman—one that is really good—and she is better than a good man; but a really bad woman is worse than the worst man."

"It is false! It is another of the old flimsy declara-



tions which you hurl at us, and in which you put a compliment for the purpose of hiding a sting. It is a slander upon reason and an outrage upon truth. Does nature deal in jugglers' tricks that she creates beings of the same parentage who, upon the simple difference of sex, act upon totally different principles and answer to totally different laws? Is it any less of a juggler's trick for her to produce creatures of the same sex with those whom you said are better than the best men, who, simply because they had too much love and faith—two qualities which you laud to the skies, and reproach me of not having enough of—or because they yielded to fear, lies, or superior physical strength, at once become by nature worse than men who have had years of training in crime? Your assertion that a good woman is better than a good man, is, when we consider what you call feminine virtues, a slander upon the entire race. The woman whom you call better than the best man is the one who most quietly accepts the slavery of her own position, and most readily overlooks the ruin and shame of her sisters. Servility and callousness are thus the highest virtues you assign to women. If these are the highest virtues of the race, God pity the woe, and anguish, and groans, and tears of the future!

“You insist that a bad woman is worse than a bad man. Show me the slightest proof of what you say. You will bring up Lucrezia Borgia; the stern light of fact fails to fasten a single crime upon her; while even if she were guilty of every crime with which romance has surrounded her, she would still be better than any male member of her family who disgraced the pages of history during several centuries. You will bring up Mary I. of England; after all the harm that can possibly be said of her is spoken, it must still be admitted that she was far better than either her father or her husband. The persecutions which she inflicted upon her Protestant subjects were mild and humane beside those which her husband studied out for his unhappy victims. You will refer to Catharine De Medici, and lay the blame of St. Bartholomew's day upon her shoulders; she simply consented to that; the plot was originated by the Guises; Catharine had no office, and no power save what her strength of mind gave her; the Guises had official power, but they needed the influence of Catharine, so they took her into their plot. Even if she had entirely formed that plot she would have been no



worse than they, who were professional tyrants and murderers. Show me the list of female criminals of the present day, or any other day, to offset your fearful records of masculine crime! No, the worst women are not worse than the worst men. Because you are accustomed to see a woman mild and kindly, you are more shocked to see one prove brutal and unfeeling; because she is generally honest, there is greater surprise when she is convicted of theft; because she is generally pure, there is more horror when she proves vicious and lewd; because she is generally sober, there is more surprise when she is seen drunk. For these reasons the unthinking person will readily say, 'Oh, yes, a bad woman is worse than a bad man.' But it is not true, and under our present system it never can be; because in the lowest and most brutal families, the girls receive a little more care, a little more restraint, a little more guidance and protection, than do the boys; and the effect of this training, poor and inadequate as it is, will produce a slight difference in the female's favor between herself and her brother, even after both have become professional criminals. But every blatant demagogue who refuses to think or to investigate, who closes his ear to the cry of suffering and his eye to the writhings of distress, that he may more completely concentrate his powers in gaining place and profit for himself, rolls that sentence into his mouth, launches it forth, and disgraces logic by calling his hackneyed declaration argument.

"For ages upon ages this little world stood still, and the great sun spent its time rolling round it, to give it light. The ignorant strong said so, and if the wise weak chose to investigate they did so under fear of persecution and death. The strong stamped their feet and said, 'This earth is the centre of the universe,' and the weak trembled and were still. Power manufactured science to suit itself then, just as it makes morals to suit itself now; and the woman who refuses to accept the moral status doled out to her, does so under fear of persecution, social ostracism—and," she added, as her voice sunk to a low whisper, as if some fearful drama was being enacted before her mental vision, "even death."

"I will admit," she went on, when her voice once more became steady, "that a woman who has once fallen, is more slow to attempt reformation than is a man. And the reason is easy to find. After a woman has once gone



wrong, she can no more return to respectability than I could climb to the stars by supporting myself upon the successive strata of air and ether through which I passed. She may, after unheard of effort, and after passing by unheeded the taunts, and gibes, and foul jests which are hurled at her on every hand, attain tolerance; but respectability—never. But if her brother seduce the weak, lie in the gutter, or rob his employer, his entire family will turn out, call in the preacher, and make a noble fight for the erring one's salvation. And when after a time he decides to leave off a portion of his evil habits, society crowns him with laurel, elderly women smile and sigh, and elderly men stroke their beards and say, 'O well, young men must sow their wild oats.'

"Is this a noble, a manly state of society, that forgives and pets in the strong that for which it crushes the weak? No; he who forgives in the rich that which he will not forgive in the poor, or condones in the strong that for which he hisses at the weak, or forgives in himself that which he will not forgive in another, is an unfeeling tyrant, and humanity groans under the heels of such. But for this state of things, we women are not responsible. We have no voice to say that you shall not license a brothel where men lose respect for woman-kind and where women go down to eternal shame. We can not forbid the issuing of illustrated papers that debauch our children's minds with scenes of lewdness and crime. Our voice is stifled under the oppressing customs of ages, and when we find courage to speak we meet only with ridicule and persecution."

"Well, Gessia, I suppose women are mistreated some; though not so bad as you think—you are fearfully prejudiced, Gessia. But then so long as it's so, and you and I can't help it, why, I think, as I've said before, that it's better to just take things as easy as possible and not fret about it."

"Where is your reason? You ask a woman to smile at the world's oiliness, and to calmly let vice take its vicious course; and yet you ask this weak, yielding creature, who consents to an alliance with shame, to mother sons who shall be as pillars of strength for the support of the republic; you ask this in the face of the fact that the noblest men of all times have been mothered by the noblest, most intelligent, and most progressive women; in face of the



fact that Alexander was the son of the beautiful and high-spirited Olympias, whom even Philip of Macedon could not induce to consent to a rival in his love ; in face of the fact that the Gracchi were the sons of the enlightened and noble Cornelia ; in face of the fact that Julius Cæsar was the son of one of the strongest women of all times ; in face of the fact that Thomas à Becket was the son of a mother whom love rendered more fearless than did valor any Saracenic warrior ; that Napoleon was the son of a mother who to the last controlled even him ; that Washington was the offspring of a woman celebrated throughout the colonies for her nobility and strength of mind ; that Lincoln remembered to his dying day the influence of the mother who died in his childhood. But why prolong the list ; the wisest, strongest, and noblest humanity is the offspring of the wisest, strongest, and noblest humanity, just as your best stock is the offspring of the best. But men are less careful of the parentage of their children than they are of that of their stock ; the latter must have the most excellent parentage that can be had.

“How can you expect a woman who smilingly allies herself with shame to mother aught save weaklings ?” How can you expect one who avenges her wrongs in secret to mother aught save rogues ? How can you expect one who frets her life away over wrongs that murder her peace of mind, to mother aught save malcontents ? Is there no warning in this thought ? Does not the prevalence of vice foreshadow a time when the men of this republic will be all inadequate to propel the ship of state ? I know that some intelligent women have thought upon this subject of injustice to the wife until they have lost faith in the institution of marriage, and one can scarcely wonder that they have done so. The institution as it is now, in which the husband must fill the ears of a stainless bride with the records of his crime, is worse than prisons and chains. But in the institution, I have not lost faith ; I believe that the pure marriage and the happy home are the best and almost the only sureties of the people against tyranny, injustice, crime, and national death. A nation holds so fiercely to its old customs that I have often wondered if justice will ever be done us—if the time will ever come when we can call our husbands our own. I used to believe that it would be all right for women to be let vote if they wanted to ; but for myself I shrunk at the thought of going



to the polls and voting. But I have learned such horrible things since marriage that I have come to believe that the ballot is our only protection."

"I can't see how the ballot will help you; so many women are so ignorant."

"And so are so many men. But the ballot educates. When it is put into the hands of a class, some of them at least will ask, 'What is this for? Why do I have it? What shall I do with it?' The ballot was given to the freedman, and it has helped him. To be sure he did not spring at once into enlightenment—it would have been unnatural had he done so—no subject class can at once throw off the shackles of ignorance and dependence that have bound it. But citizenship is a teacher, and the negro has improved under it, and he will continue to improve. When the few have the ballot they make mistakes; so would the many; and why may not the many be as quick to see and to right their mistakes as the few. Suffrage held back from a citizen for other reasons than youth, imbecility, or crime, is the beginning of tyranny. If the ballot were taken out of the hands of the poor, they would suffer far more even than now, for the rich would legislate against them. The ballot is not in the hands of women, and they suffer fearfully from the effects of saloons and brothels which they are powerless to abolish. Were the ballot given to women, many would not at first understand its use—perhaps some would at first refuse to use it at all. But the pride of citizenship would awaken them, party enthusiasm would awaken them, and they would learn; questions concerning their homes would arise, and they would find interest. The ballot is for the protection of the citizen, and more than for him, for his children, who are the wards of the republic until they reach manhood, and many of whom are allowed to perish because of inadequate laws."

"But, Gessia, the men can take care of the laws and the children and homes too."

"They *don't* do it. I'm perfectly willing for them to, but they don't and they won't."

"The ballot is unwomanly!"

"If I asked for the ballot for the purpose of standing half drunk on the street corners, cursing the candidates on the opposite ticket, or for the purpose of walking through a crowd to the polls to show a new dress, I too would say,



the ballot is unwomanly. But when I ask for it as a means of protecting my home and my children it is a different matter. A woman is not and can not be unwomanly when she is seeking the good of her children, no matter what be the manner of her quest. A woman with children should have every advantage of knowledge and morality that can possibly be given her; for she who holds in her arms a child of her own, clasps to her bosom the destinies of the world."

"Oh, I know, Gessia, that a mother has a great deal of influence; but then I don't believe they need the ballot. I'm afraid they'd make bad use of it."

"Bad use of it? Merciful heavens! Would it be the first time it had been made bad use of? Could we do worse than to keep the poor groaning, and vote our sons and daughters to death and shame? Could we make worse mistakes than to shame ourselves, stir up sectional strife, legislate in favor of political factions, forgetful of justice, and toady to wealth and power? But I do not care so much for these latter questions; there are wiser heads than mine to study them. I would like to vote for the purity of home and the salvation of my sisters—for the protection of a happiness to others which has fled from me forever."

John was silent for a time. "Gessia," he said at last, "the time was when you were so different—when everything you said was sweet and trustful and loving; but now you seem completely filled with abuse; you fairly rave when you get started!"

"The time when I was sweet and trustful and loving," she said, quietly, "was when I had faith in the world and trusted the man I loved. But it has all changed. The world has turned its guilty side to me by showing me the flaws in a character I adored; and now, all I can see are hands stretched out for succor, and all I can hear are the wailings of the lost. The hatred of social tyranny and injustice have grown so strong within me, that I feel as if I were steeped to the lips in venom. I am like yon river, that flows sweetly and smoothly along, singing over white pebbles, and reflecting the light of sunbeams, until its bosom is darkened by the storm; then the foul impurities of a hundred hills are washed into its bed; it swells, and its dark, angry current mutters sullenly along, carrying with it the drift of happier and brighter days. Forgive



my rudeness and impetuosity, dear; they are the children of despair, and I can no more repress them than I could keep down the dancing, singing ecstasy of my soul, in those days when your name, to me, meant all that was grand and heroic and noble."

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## CHAPTER XV.

### A WEDDIN' DANCE.

CORNELIA ELY had been wooed and won by Sam McCain. All the neighborhood had heard of it. Everybody talked about it. The wedding had already taken place, but Sam and Cornelia were not satisfied; they wanted a weddin' dance.

Every McCain that had so far been married from the paternal mansion had been given a weddin' dance and Sam insisted that it was no more than fair that he should have one. Was not he the youngest son? The very youngest child, save Mary? He talked to Old Breezy and Aunt Sarah and begged them to reconsider. Aunt Sarah had said that there should be no more dances at her house that fall, and Old Breezy had said that he was getting old, and the sight of people flying about over the floor made his head ache. But Sam earnestly begged them to reconsider. Cornelia shed tears. Then Old Breezy told of the hardships he'd had away back in forty-nine, and now the idea of his having his life pestered out of him by his youngest son, about a weddin' dance, was too much. But Sam begged leave to waive the year forty-nine, and insisted that his father should reconsider. Aunt Sarah at last agreed to arbitrate. She agreed that if Cornelia would tack some comforts, and cut some carpet rags for her, that she would yield her objections, and attempt to move the old man. The old man finally gave way; he agreed to reconsider, and as a consequence of said reconsideration the weddin' dance was announced as a coming event. The time was set, and Sam mounted a broncho to announce the joyful tidings to the neighbors. He told Bill Ely and Jake Muldoon to bring the Smith girls, and bade Erastus McGaggy bring Julia McCollum. He was going



to tell Jake Mayfair to bring Celia McDowell; but Jake promptly informed him that he could row his own boat—not meaning any offense, however. Dan Ely and Bill Shuff were notified to come supplied with music. The Solomons, the Ransoms, the Sheldons, and in fact the whole neighborhood, were invited, and a “roarin’ time” was anticipated.

Now, to tell the truth, Old Breezy McCain and family were a little under the high social standard of Boulder Creek. They were uneducated, comparatively poor, and lived in a log house. Then if all must be told the old man’s memory and judgment were quite as poor as his purse. He had a natural genius for romancing, and his imagination out-ran his discretion to such an extent that his auditors occasionally laughed in his face. But as his stories generally had a humorous turn, he pocketed the laugh as a compliment, and taxed his imagination still further.

But the whole amusement-loving neighborhood always turned out to a “dance,” even were it held at the residence of Old Breezy McCain; that is, all but the Hattons—the Hattons did not get invitations—they were not wanted among such fine folks as the Ransoms.

“Do you want to go to the dance, Gessia?” asked John one afternoon after he had been notified.

“O, I’m not particular about it,” said Gessia, quietly.

“Why not? you used to delight in dancing.”

“Yes, I know, but the children—”

“Never mind about the children;” said Hetty Ann Bales as she entered the door. “I heered what you was sayin’, Miss Solomon, as I come up to the door, and I’d rather keep the children than not. I don’t ’low to go, and if you and John wants to go and have a good time, why, I’ll be glad to keep the little boys. I’m not one of the sort to neglect ’em and forget to look after ’em. I don’t consider that ’cause a child’s a boy that he can git along without any lookin’ after or bringin’ up. I allers say that if it’s really the truth that a boy is naterally wilder than a girl, that he needs a sight more lookin’ after and more careful trainin’ than she does; but he don’t get it, that’s all. He’s gen’ly let grow up in such a manner that he’s got no raisin’ himself, and is ready to destroy the effects of the good raisin’ that some of the neighbor girls has had,”



"Humph! You couldn't spoil those children if you wanted to. They are babies. Ralph is only a little more than three years old," said John in a decided tone.

"Yes," said Hetty Ann, "and the fruit that gits frosted, gits frosted while it's in the bud; and that that gits stung, gits stung while it's in the blossom; and that that gits out of the blossom all right is mighty apt to make good fruit. A child can have his health blighted, and can be let learn mean habits in the buddin' time of his very babyhood, till he'll never be a healthy nor a pure minded man. And he can learn as much meanness in his blossomin' childhood in two weeks, as a man could in four, and he'll never forgit it either. His mind is as soft and yieldin' as an unbaked loaf of bread; and if I stick my finger down into an unbaked loaf, the mark stays there and gits baked in. The child's jest like the fruit I was talkin' about—if he gits stung with evil, in the blossom of life, he'll carry the marks jest as plain as a plum will; and if he gits out of the blossom age all right, he's tolable safe."

Here John arose and announced that he was going out to work. He was not overfond of Hetty Ann's philosophy.

"Mrs. Bales," said Gessia, "how in the name of reason can a mother keep her children's minds from becoming poisoned in such an infected neighborhood as this? There is scarcely a man on the Creek who is in the least careful what he says before his children; scarcely a woman who does not delight in coarse jokes; and as a consequence their children, often those who cannot talk plain, lisp out vice and practice the most disgusting habits."

"Well, Miss Solomon, I know it's hard to keep children clean and safe, but then it's worth doin', and it's the only way. You might jest as well try to bring rotten fruit back to soundness as to git evil out of a mind after once it's been trained in. It gets to be second natur' and it won't come out. A man that ain't been taught when he's a child that little girls have jest as much right to have their way once in a while as he has, and that other folks have the same nateral right that he has, never will learn it, and that's all there is to it. He may run agin the law and git punished because he don't see it, but that won't make him see either, like he ort to. He'll jest cuss the law, and won't understand it.

"The future citizens of this country are makin' weed



fences and wooden trains and corn-cob houses and play bridges and mud pies now, and are crowdin' one another aside and slappin' each other and cussin' and blackguardin' according to their respective natures and teachin', and jest as they're let behave now at their play, jest so will they behave forty years from now in the business of life. I tell you lots of parents ain't half parents; they don't know half the time where their children are or what they're doin', and what's more they don't care. But there's men growin' up somewhere to fill the prisons and swing from the gallows of future times, and who knows but they're the very ones that's bein' let form mean habits and run wild on the streets now? Many a mother will let her children run to grass so she can make stylish clothes for 'em, or fix up pie to ruin their stomachs, or go out calling on folks that don't care the snap of their finger for her. I say it's a mother's place to let style and society both go if need be, and take care of her children's minds and hearts and health; and a woman that's treated right is willin' to that. But then many a man will act so mean that a woman will lose all heart, like I did, and not care much what happens to anything. A woman that's goin' to raise a family of children needs the best treatment of any critter on airth; for creatin' the citizens of a country is the heaviest job about a country.

"Then lots of parents seem to think business talents grow on trees, and that people can pick 'em off and use 'em when they like; so they don't teach their children the difference between business and stealin'; and as a consequence part of the boys take to some kind of a more or less respectable stealin', and the rest tramp. I tell you there's only one person in the whole country that ort to come anyways near bein' as smart or as good as a child's mother, and that's his grandmother. But when a woman is jest edicated in weakness and foolishness and dependence and scandal, you can't expect much of her children. Ike Ransom thinks he's a mighty smart man, but his old Texas cows don't come up with thoroughbred Durham calves, for all that.

"When a person sees a passel of little children runnin' with foul-mouthed boys and girls, he thinks it means that the mother is off somewhere havin' a good time, and the father is off tryin' to save his country talkin' politics; but while it means that, it also means somethin' more; it



means ignorance and hunger and crime and trampin', and like as any way, prison, for them youngsters. The mother will come home bye-and-bye and tell the hired girl to bring the children in and wash their faces; but law, she don't suspect the load of filth that's on their minds, that no washin' will ever clean off. I believe in children playin'—I like to see 'em frolickin' like so many lambs; but I believe in 'em bein' kept innocent and pure. I know a pure-minded child can play lots more light-hearted than a child that's allers studyin' meanness. Sin and spite make people old and sour, when they ort to be young and happy. If you want to keep yer little boys' minds clean, you'll jest hev to keep 'em away from vicious children; that's the only way to keep sech children from hurtin' 'em. A mother can take an old split-bottomed rockin' chair, and hold the youngest child and tell stories to the others while they play round her—all about history and science and questions of right and wrong, sich as come up every day, till the children git so they don't care a thing about meanness; and she can sit in an old split-bottomed chair, or a plush rocker, either, and can talk in sich a manner that the children won't care for nothin' *but* meanness. The mind grows on what it feeds on, and its health is jest as easily ruined as the bodily health is. I've seen the worst kind of cases of mental dyspepsia and consumption in children that wa'n't twelve years old. But here I go on talkin', instead of tellin' you what I come for. As soon as I heered of the dance I said to myself that you ort to go, and that I'd keep the children. It'll do you good, Miss Solomon, to go and git roused up a little. You're lookin' mighty bad of late."

"Oh, Mrs. Bales, I do not care to dance any more. I used to think it grand amusement, but now when I think of it, it seems foolish. Everything seems so flat and useless."

"Well, Miss Solomon, you'd better wake up and try to git some cheer. You'd better wear yer trouble out or it'll wear you out. Don't think about it at all."

"I can not help it—and I can't reconcile myself to society at all. The men we meet and dance with at balls have danced at other places, where—Oh! I can not think of anything else!"

"Well you'd better think of something else. You've got two little children that loves you mighty well and that



needs you mighty bad; this worryin' is bad for you, and it may land you where you don't much want to go."

"Oh," said Gessia in quiet despair, "if it were not for the children I would not care where I went nor how soon. There is nothing else left here. There is nothing worth living for but love, and nothing worth doing but loving. The storm threatens, the lightning blasts, the flood sweeps away, fire burns and destroys, wealth takes wings and flies away, style is endless vexation, and humanity is false and treacherous. For the vexation and fright and endless worry occasioned by these, there is but one solace—to love some one who can be relied upon through them all. Our adoration for this one and for his little ones, will give us strength to smile at fortune's reverses and fill our hearts with charity for humanity's quarrels, lies, and deceits. But when we learn that the one we loved and called our own is not ours, there is nothing left but desolation."

"Miss Solomon," said Hetty Ann, tearfully, "now do you know what you're doin'? I tell you men ain't worth the women they kill, and the women are silly to let themselves be killed. But it's no use talkin'. You jest dress up and go to the dance and have a good time."

"A good time? How is anyone who is losing faith in everything and learning to hate everybody, to have a good time?"

"You orten to hate everybody. I know that lots of people are mean, but then some ain't. I've seen decent people as well as mean ones. Then them as is bad is to be pitied some as well as hated. I don't doubt they'd done better if they'd been raised right, and then had decent company and encouragement afterward. I believe in always findin' out people 'fore you hate 'em. A person ain't necessarily mean jest 'cause he's a man, though I admit he often takes advantage of that fact to be mean. It's always well to investigate 'fore we express our opinion. Now I used to think when I heered of a Northern man doin' a mean trick that he done it 'cause he was a Yankee; but I've been well acquainted with some Yankees since then, and I've come to the conclusion now, that he done the mean thing 'cause he was mean. I've found out that a man ain't obliged to be mean jest 'cause he come from Massachusetts, nor ain't necessarily an angel jest 'cause he was born in Tennessee. I don't deny that cli-



mate has its effect on traits, but then where people of one State have one kind of good traits, them of another have another kind. But as for meanness, that's distributed round so that all sections has got a mighty big share of it. But don't you worry 'bout the meanness nor nothing else ; you jest go to the dance and have a good time."

" Well, I'll go, Mrs. Bales, and I thank you for your offer about the children. If I never get a chance to pay you back—"

" Its paid back already, Miss Solomon. You are the only woman in this neighborhood, 'ceptin' Sallie Hatton, that's ever treated me like I was a woman. Jest 'cause I ain't got anything but caliker to wear, and 'cause my husband's a drunkard, I know I ain't welcome at their houses, and I do know that I've often been surprised at the way you treated me. And now I must go ; I've got to make some cookies and git some meat on to bile, so Josiah can have his warm supper. Good-day, Miss Solomon."

It happened that Dan Ely and Bill Shuff, who were to furnish the music at the ball, were late. The guests had arrived, had waited, and their feet had become uneasy. Investigating parties went ever and anon out upon the front porch to look and listen for their coming. Jake Mayfair sat beside the school teacher, holding a fan as blue as that lady's own eyes, and expressing to her often and volubly, his wonder that the music was so slow.

Now it chanced that Aunt Sarah McCain was a musician ; it had been her custom occasionally to sing for the little circle of friends who met now and then at her house for the purpose of dancing away a few hours. She had never sung for any general parties, but the higher social lights of the neighborhood had often heard of her music, and longed to listen to it. They saw that now was their time. They sent forward Ida Jane Ransom and Mrs. Sheldon to speak to Aunt Sarah, thinking perhaps that the well known fact of that seal-skin sacque costing two hundred and fifty dollars would have its effect. The old lady hesitated. She informed them that she had decided to sing for no more dancin'. The embassadoresses insisted, and Aunt Sarah finally concluded that since strangers were present she would for this one time waive her decision. She announced that she would sing, and the higher social



lights crowded upon the floor in anticipation of a rich treat. Erastus McGaggy, who was new to the neighborhood, stood at the head of the quadrille with Julia MacCollum; Ike Ransom and Ida Jane and Jake Mayfair and Miss Royal took the next two places, while Will Hockman, Ike Ransom's exceedingly dudish cousin from the East, who had heard much of the McCains during his brief stay in the neighborhood, selected Mary McCain as his partner, so that his amusement would be complete. Mary was of course much flattered; her face would have blushed with pleasure until it shone red as the artificial poppies on her head, had not the layer of Pride of Colorado flour been too thick upon her features.

When the quadrille was fully formed, Aunt Sarah shook out the folds of her plaid dress and the muslin ruffles of her cap, and rushing forward, seized Erastus McGaggy by the arm and whirled him violently round in front of his partner, and exclaimed in a business-like tone: "Now, stranger, I'll tell you what I want you to do;" then she added to a well known and lively frontier air the following words:

I want you to dance with the first gal,  
Tudle addle, addle ah,  
Then with the next gal  
Tudle addle, addle ah,  
Then with the next gal  
Tudle addle, addle ah,  
Then with my daughter Mary  
With a whoop de dooden do."

She sent each gentleman round in this fashion, and then followed with the ladies. By the time the figure was done the entire eight, with the exception of Mary, were quaking with laughter. Mary, however, was so delirious with joy that she did not perceive the ridicule. Even the pale face of Gessia, as she sat in her obscure corner, was lighted up by a faint smile as she watched the antics of the old woman and listened to the odd inflections of her high-pitched voice. Just as the laughing, perspiring dancers were taking their seats, the musicians arrived, and Aunt Sarah resigned in their favor. She sat down in a quiet corner and mopped the perspiration from a countenance that showed great satisfaction for a work well done.

The violins were tuned, and soon the dancers were whirling to their music. The music whirled a little too. The gentlemanly musicians had gone to Milroy City in the



evening, and were consequently late at the ball ; the cause might have been a few drinks of that particularly strong soda water from the Arriba Spring for which Milroy City is so justly celebrated. One very strong argument in favor of the soda water, is the fact that Bill Shuff's leading peculiarity is a habit he has of slapping his thigh and saying, "I'm a sensible man, I am by jingoes." Now as Bill's children went barefoot five-sixths of the year and wore moccasins made by their mother the other sixth, and went hungry once in a while—occasionally twice in a while—it is not likely that a sensible man whose children were in such a plight would give his money to a man that wouldn't work, but was always ready to gobble up other men's work wages to clothe and feed his own children. A sensible man, according to some people's opinions, would have used the fruits of his labor to feed and clothe his own, and not another man's children. And Bill being as he himself averred, a sensible man, would of course have acted on that principle ; so it must have been some of that "awful strong" soda water from the Arriba Spring that unsteadied the music at the weddin' dance.

There was a perfect furor concerning Miss Royal. Her blue eyes must have had a direct connection with Cupid's quiver, for they wounded Jake Mayfair past all cure, and seriously damaged Will Hockman and Erastus McGaggy. Jake was as helpless as the proverbial moth flying around the candle. No matter who was talking or dancing with Miss Royal, he was continually making pilgrimages to her to give her all sorts of information ; and when these had all been exhausted, he, with the very best of intentions, purloined her fan for the purpose of bringing it back again. Erastus McGaggy gave her a great deal of valuable information concerning Yellowstone Park and came back three times to relate circumstances he had previously forgotten to mention. Will Hockman trod upon her dress so as to have the opportunity of apologizing in his courtly city style. Even Ike Ransom donned some of his old time gallantry for the benefit of the pretty school teacher, which caused Ida Jane some alarm, that even the thought of the seal-skin sacque could not wholly assuage. She finally got possession of Ike, and angrily asked him if he had forgotten how Miss Royal hadn't whipped Jakie Hatton when he mauled Tommy so mercilessly, and cast such an odious slur upon the family honor. Ike then ceased his attentions,



but he still looked hungrily at Miss Royal in a degree that caused Ida Jane to turn very pale beneath her immaculate rouge.

The amusement ran high; and ever and anon Bill Shuff laid down his violin and made a hasty pilgrimage to the wood-shed. Might there be a jug of that same Arriba soda water out there? At all events the music became more and more unsteady. Sam McCain had danced nine sets with Cornelia. He was warm with the amusement, and somewhat heated concerning the erratic music. Perspiration, dust, and indignation struggled with each other for the mastery of his countenance. Finally at the close of a figure he raised his head and shouted in the majestic tone so peculiar to recently married men:

"Bill Shuff, if I was such a low down dog as to try to play for a dance when I was in your fix, I'd go out and kick myself. The way you're sawing that machine, a man can't tell "The Girl I left Behind me" from "The Irish Washerwoman."

"Did you call me a low down dog?" shrieked Bill.

"Yes, I did."

"Well, I jest tell yer now, that there's jest as good blood in the Shuffs as there is in any McCain that ever lived!" screamed Bill.

"Yes, and you're about three times as drunk as any McCain I ever saw!"

"I'll bust this fiddle all to ribbons over yer head, if yer head ain't too soft!" shrieked Bill, as he leaped down from the platform. Dan Ely caught his arm, but the momentum already generated was too much for his muscle, and Bill descended into the midst of the quadrille like a mountain lion into a flock of lambs. The bride threw her arms around her husband's neck, and Jake Mayfair, in the undue excitement of the moment, put his arm round Miss Royal's waist, and favored her with the information that he proposed to throw everybody in the house out of the window provided that were necessary to save her. But the tears of the bride, the wailings of Aunt Sarah, the protestations of old Breezy, and the general advice of the crowd caused a better era of feelings to prevail. The violin was spared. The hardness of Sam McCain's head went untested. Everybody was pleased over this amicable arrangement save Jake Mayfair. He was a most excellent, but very bashful young man, and this was the first time he had ever found



courage to venture so far with a lady. Then the idea of all the danger being over in half a minute! But Jake did not forget; he never brushed the right sleeve of the coat he wore that evening as long as it was a coat.

Will Hockman and Erastus McGaggy met in a dark corner soon after and assured each other that if Bill Shuff had pitched on to Jake Mayfair, that it would have served him just right. They never saw anybody getting forward and hateful and disagreeable and self-important so fast as he was. That girl wouldn't look at him twice if it wasn't for his saddle horses, and it would serve him just right when she fired him, as she'd do inside of a week, sure.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### AFTERWARD.

"WELL, Gessia, how did you enjoy the dance?" asked John Solomon of his weary wife the morning after the ball.

"Oh, it was very nice—considering everything. I enjoyed Mrs. McCain's singing."

"It was too bad about that fuss. Such things give a neighborhood a bad name. Neighborhoods ought to look out for their reputations as well as individuals."

"Yes," said the wife, wearily.

"Why didn't you dance more, Gessia?"

"O, I danced four times. That was as often as anyone asked me."

"Yes, but you sat behind people, and hid in dark corners where no one could see you. And then you ought to have been dressed better." She did not answer, and finally he said vehemently: "That school teacher is certainly soft. She actually acts like she cared something for that Jake Mayfair."

"What is wrong with him?" asked Gessia, as her large eyes dilated.

"Oh, nothing in particular—but then he's slow—has no spunk about him."

"Why, you told me—"

"Oh, yes, I know he got that out child of the river. But



that don't signify. He is queer. He's not companionable. He's kind-hearted enough, for all I know, but then he's not like young men in general. Now he's been out here ever since he was a boy and yet—well, he's just gone along and has never made any stir one way or the other."

"I never heard of him fussing with any one."

"No; he don't fuss. But he's got such peculiar opinions. He don't try to please people. Now he puts forward some of your theories. Of course I have come to admit that if you want to think that way, it's not so bad—not that I altogether agree with you—but then it's unbearable and womanish in him."

Gessia threw up her hands and screamed. Then she buried her face in the baby's curls. John looked vexed.

"Now, Gessia," he said, "what's the use of acting so? You ought to reason. Jake Mayfair isn't popular; no man with such opinions can be or ever will be. I'm not going to say that a man ought to be bad—I've admitted that I did wrong—but then when a man thinks that way it's better for him to keep it still. Now I heard Ike Ransom cussing him just the other day."

"How can you listen to Ike Ransom? He has branded you with hopeless disgrace and misery. He has done you an injury that all the angels cannot right. Were he to curse me, I would feel it a blessing; for such as he curse saints and laud devils and hypocrites."

"Well, he's got lots of influence, anyhow."

"Oh yes! he has! he has! Hypocrisy, deceit, tyranny, and injustice have all the influence, and those who would see justice done to the weak are scoffed at. Influence, yes. Those who persecute always have that, while those who would reform have almost none. People fear to follow the reformer's lead even were he conducting them to saintship."

"Because of his fanaticism?"

"Fanaticism? What is the fanaticism of the reformer compared to that of his persecutor? Search history through, and you will find seas of blood and acres of fagot and flame for your answer. No, they fear to follow lest they be also followed by persecution, and because they would be arrayed upon the winning side. They love ease and popularity, and they will not open their eyes to distress; they love prosperity, and they will not risk injury



to their business by proclaiming themselves in sympathy with the weak and despised. Oh! Oh! Oh! will the time ever come again when the weak will be protected, when the noble and the just will be also the popular? Justice and reason are spasmodic. One great wave of improvement brought Washington to be a national idol in spite of the opposition that hissed from the lips of tyranny in the Old World; another enthroned Lincoln in the popular heart, but both these waves rose from one clan's hatred of the wrong and injustice practiced by another. Will the time ever come when men will be noble enough to throw off their *own* evil natures, to give liberty, equality, and justice to their own helpless dependents? No, I fear it will not. - Our very shrieks are echoed by derisive laughs, and those who would champion our helplessness are scorned. Power, popularity, custom, law, and respectability are all on your side. You exclude us from equality in your best colleges that you may keep us ignorant and make us more willing to bear the yoke; you refuse us equal wages for labor that we may more readily yield ourselves to prostitution; you cut off to your utmost power the number of honest employments we may engage in, that we must the more readily yield to marriage, which often is alike misery and disgrace. Under such a system as ours, what man can assure himself of the love of his wife? She may have come to him ever so willingly, but how does he know that it was love that made her willing? Society required that she should marry; she must have bread and clothes and social standing—she must escape that fearful disgrace, old maidenhood—she will be excused for taking the most disreputable man for these reasons. How can any man, cognizant of such facts, assure himself that his wife does not secretly scorn him? Is it to be supposed that all the kings, tyrants, and slave drivers who have required unhesitating obedience, endless service, and ceaseless protestations of fidelity and affection from their shrinking underlings, received one jot of *love* from the cringing hearts that trembled at their lightest word? Not they. But they received infinitudes of silent, hopeless hate that smouldered throughout ages, handed down from sire to son, until it broke out in flame that lit up scenes of murder, rapine, outrage, and devastation, such as the French Revolution and the Haytien rebellion. The nation that has a subject class will save credit, property, and life, by doing



voluntary justice to that class. Think of the innocent and harmless son of the king of France, lying in prison, beaten, starved, unwashed, covered with sores and filth, and dying like a dog at last. He suffered not for his own sins, but for those of his tyrant class. He suffered for fields laid waste, for homes desolated, for daughters, wives, and sisters seduced, for fathers and brothers ground down under taxes concerning which they had no voice. Beware the fury of the long-suffering subject class! We are silently looking on while taxes in which we have no voice are being levied on our possessions; we are weeping for daughters, sisters, and friends seduced under protection of laws which know us not; we are punished just as relentlessly under those laws as if we had formed them; we must listen with a smile while our husbands boast their shame, and must bring forth sons, whom your laws license to commit fearful crimes, and who in their turn will place their heels upon our necks.

“Look where your laws are leading you. Your licensed brothels are breeding effeminacy, weakness of resolution, moral suicide, and blindness to justice, as well as bodily weakness, disease, and often death. You care not for the women they destroy, but this is what they are doing for the men. They are standing records of your inefficiency—your admission of a crime which you say you must license because you can not control. There is poor little Anna Gray—only fifteen years old—who has just fallen. She had no mother, and consequently no teaching. Her beneficent country did not require that the wretches who kept her in their house for the labor of her thin little hands, should give her a day’s schooling and consequently she has never had a day’s schooling. She cannot read, nor write her own name, but she is destined to become the mother of some one who will doubtless be as wretched as herself. She yielded to the threats of her employer’s brutal son, whom your worthless laws will excuse for the payment of a small sum of money, and she is lost. She is doomed to endless suffering and shame, as is also her helpless child, whom your laws allow to be deserted and scorned by its father. Why does not your law license her to murder that child? Its life can only be one of endless misery; is it not infinitely better off dead? Would it not suffer far less were she to strangle it as soon as it is born? But no, you shrink at



the idea of licensing murder; yet you favor licensing that which produces not only continual murder but also endless suffering and shame to the weak."

"O Gessia, why can't you be reasonable? Men don't think about these things. I don't suppose they would be so lenient to the fault if they were to think it over. I'm beginning to see that it ought to be looked into; but then you always carry things too far. You ought to allow for thoughtlessness."

"The strong are very often thoughtless where the welfare of others is concerned. Their rule is to enjoy, and to see that their favorite enjoyments are licensed and made respectable, no matter what is the result. The strong never forgive the weak for thoughtlessness, if such thoughtlessness should chance to interfere with their prosperity and enjoyment. But beware of thoughtlessness; it sometimes hangs a veil even before the eyes of the strong so that they cannot see the danger that approaches. Such thoughtlessness menaces the very life of the nation. The low moral tone and the licensed brothel are ruining the ambition of young men. The youth has his imagination fed upon foul stories and filthy jests until what might have been virtuous love becomes vicious lust. The law opens the door to places of gratification, and indulgence causes brutality to grow. The young man loses his desire for a home where a wife smiles tenderest welcome and where happy children play; he no longer lays by money for the sake of supporting such a home, for all he earns goes to buy the caresses of the lost. What wonder that our roads are lined with tramps? What wonder that men who have failed to found homes, who have spent their lives revelling in crime, whose youth was lost, and whose ambition was dissipated under the shadow of the law, beg for bread from door to door? If your country was invaded by hostile hordes could you expect such men as these, to fight like those whose wives and children have wept against the blue uniforms, and waved a tearful good-bye as the loved one marched away? The home is all we have to depend on for the creation of noble citizens; and yet your laws almost ignore it. Why not make it a grand institution, and give it the protection and encouragement it needs and deserves?"

"If the encouraging and licensing of this horror continues, the homes will not only become fewer in number, but



will degenerate in character. The best and noblest women will refuse to marry if they must lower themselves by so doing; and the unions of criminal men and weak women will bring forth a nation of criminal weaklings, indifferent to aught save indulgence and ease, and careless alike of national and family improvement. There are thousands of men to-day tramping the roads, lounging about saloons and perspiring in prisons, who might have been good citizens with loved homes and loving children, if they had in childhood known the blessing of moral homes where the lessons of virtue, frugality, and industry were taught, and if they had had their early sins placed out of their reach by law. There are thousands of noble women receiving taunts as old maids, who might have been loving wives to these men, had their teachings and surroundings kept them fit to receive honest love."

"But, Gessia, what's the use of your worrying so? You cannot help the matter; it is beyond your control; you'll just injure yourself."

"Oh! if I could only do a little toward bettering things! I wish I had the strength of a giant to shout aloud; but that I have not. But if I could only save one woman from such suffering as seems to be the common lot of woman, I would feel a little more reconciled to the horrors of life. But what chance is there? It is as you say—it is beyond my control. I am only one of suffering and helpless thousands, who are of a weak and subject class."

"Then stop fretting, and cheer up."

"The darkness of prison and the hopelessness of despair may indeed unnerve the arm to exertion, and still the wail of sorrow; but because violence of action is thus restrained, does it necessarily follow that the bond-soul will exult, and that cheer will reign, because freedom and justice are impossible?"

John looked wonderingly at her. What horrible things she was saying to him! The time was when no one would have dared to talk so to him; but now as he sat looking at her, resentment was impossible. The great dark eyes and the colorless face with its lines of suffering awed him into respect and submission; but the respect seemed that for some being not of earth, and the submission seemed to be tendered to some dark and mysterious fate. His life was full of dreadful facts, yet he did not



now feel inclined to flee the presence of the woman who upbraided him. He felt as if he preferred to sit with bowed head in her presence and think. His stubborn heart was beginning to yield. He began to ask himself whether he would be satisfied with the share of life's blessings that had been meted out to his wife. He was beginning to see that earth, as it is, can only give hopeless misery to sensitive, high-souled creatures; it is a fit home only for the callous and unthinking; would the era of coarseness ever give way?

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE COURSE OF EVENTS.

DURING the weeks following the weddin' dance, John Solomon did some intense thinking. The home for which he had hoped so much, was for some reason a failure. The bright, beautiful being whom he had induced to share his lot, had become a faded, careworn creature, the rustle of whose garments was painfully like the waving of a shroud. The children shrank from him and clung crying and whining to their mother's skirts. They did not seem like the ordinary healthy children he had known; Little Henry did not race about on his tiny feet and laugh and crow like a healthy child should; Ralph did not ransack his father's tool-boxes, and break up things, and run and shout till his throat seemed well nigh ready to burst. They trotted about after their mother as if they feared their father and distrusted the world. The house was sombre and forbidding; and although the housekeeping and the cooking were faultless, John felt as if it were not home—as if he were a stranger there. One morning as he was repairing the fence of his lower pasture, the question which had long been forming in his mind appeared before him, all ready to assail him. He who would indulge in the thoughtless injustices and the social crimes of youth, must wholly dispense with that soul-prompter, Conscience; he must become completely hardened. If he do not, the injustice which in some moment of fancied victory but real defeat he reaped upon his weaker neighbor, will arise



in fearful forms to assail his pretensions to humanity ; the social tyranny, which in the triumph of masculine strength he visited upon one of the females of his kind, whom nature made weaker than himself and appointed him to protect, will madly assault his fine spun theories of equality and justice, and like a fiend, howl dismally through the mental tempest it raises. Our sin, after we have committed it, can never be vanquished ; it lives to assail us in a thousand different ways ; it can not be recalled ; it will not down ; it grows, and with every year of advancing reason it assails us more fearfully, more remorselessly, until at last it lashes us into the grave, where the forgetfulness of death is our only balm.

“ What did you gain by that early sin ? ” asked the assailing questioner called Conscience. The thoughts all came back to him—every hated memory—and with fearful intensity. He remembered how his weakness had yielded to the persuasions of others—how he had loathed the coarse, vulgar woman who had been his first associate—how he had pitied the shrinking, delicate creature who had been his second—how he had told Ike Ransom that his self-respect was going, and how Ike had slapped him on the shoulder and told him playfully that he was a greeny, and that time and experience would make that all right. But had time made it all right ? One of the thoughts which he had so often commanded to still its voice, spoke again ; It was that of that same second associate, who a few weeks after his visit to her had, with her hand, stilled the throbbing of her shamed and broken heart and been buried with the county ;—and he had kissed her—had fondled and embraced her for his selfish, hated lust, but had not raised a hand to lift her out of her shame. And here was Gessia—pure, sweet, loved Gessia—dying by inches for his crimes ; here were his children, turning away, even from his smile, and shrinking from his touch—here was his home, dark and gloomy as a tomb, with the spectres of dead hopes stalking eternally through it.

Then up sprung the opposite picture, which was a thousand times more galling—the sweet, lost, never to be tasted might-have-been ; the lovely wife, with her fair hair flowing about her shoulders, running to meet him at noon and eventide, her dewy lips upturned for a loving kiss ; and after her, two shouting, laughing boys, each striving to be first to meet papa and have the highest perch upon his



shoulder. He began to wonder if, after all, man's greatest happiness was not to be found in his home, his wife and children, and in clean and holy love. It was in vain now that he told himself that he was blameless because others set the example. It was no longer any comfort to assure himself that Gessia was foolish upon the subject; for the other thought would come—that were she ever so fanatical on that subject, life might have been infinitely sweet with her if only he had been stainless. He could not work; the pale face of his wife and his gloomy children haunted him; he threw down his hammer and started for the house. Bitter thoughts of his mother arose; why had she not trained him? Why had she not put some of the care she had lavished upon his clothes, upon his soul? Why had not the laws of his country placed crime out of his reach?

The untaught nature that wishes to tyrannize because it loved itself more than aught else, that loves to torture because it desires to feel its own strength and investigate the capacity of suffering in another—that brutality bequeathed us by our ancestors of the cave, that bids us inflict pain on another that we may the more exult in our own strength and security, can only be defeated of its tyranny and directed into humanity, by the most careful training. The unthinking, ignorant child, who in the seclusion of some sheltered glade, gloats over the torture he wrings from the quivering flesh of some hapless frog, is obeying one of the instincts of his inherited nature; he is exulting over and destroying that which is weaker than himself. He does not reason from himself to his victim; he feels no remorse at the pain he is inflicting, because it is felt by another creature and not by himself. He does not reason that the time may come when he, also, may meet a conqueror. Against this inhuman inheritance there is but one bulwark;—the influence of human reason, experience, and sympathy, as taught to the youth of the race, by nature's great improver, the parent. One of these parents must, like the father-bird, leave the home nest to seek for food; the heavy responsibility of changing the brute instincts of childhood into the glorious reason of man must devolve almost entirely upon the mother; and just in proportion as she is strong, forewarned, capable, noble, and happy, just in that proportion will the race be trained out of its brutality. The child whose evil nature is not



suppressed, whose selfishness is not brought under the control of his reason, whose desire to bend others to his will is not scattered by a perception of the rights of his fellows, will find his blindness to justice outgrowing his physical body. There is hope for the selfish, unlovable child—he may be trained; but he who has grown old in blindness, prejudice, and unreason, will seldom open his eyes and see.

The being whose youth was not tenderly nurtured will, be he ever so callous, suffer fearfully for his lack of perception. In his march through life he will encounter many creatures; some of these he will love, but his instinct of unreasoning conquest will nevertheless destroy them. He has not learned that there are individualities different from his own—he would bend those he loves to his own tyrant will; and thus he crushes what he would enjoy. Selfishness and tyranny ever defeat their own ends. The despot is followed by the mute hate of his victims; he perceives that none love him; he comes to view the world from his own soulless standpoint; and his unloved, unloving heart withers within him and dies. What might have been the sublimest heroism, the most resplendent knight-hood, becomes through opportunity for crime and lack of training, the most sordid and self-destroying tyranny. But while the females of the race receive the treatment and the training that are now meted out to them, we can hope for little improvement in their offspring.

The awakening of John Solomon had been slow in coming; it had not been brought about altogether by the arguments to which he had listened; the foreshadowing of a fearful event did much toward it. It was not so much the injustice he had done a class that sickened his heart, as it was the presaging of calamity to himself and his happiness. Charity for him, reader; he had been allowed to grow up thinking only of self. He found his wife standing in the middle of the kitchen with her hands on the back of a chair, looking straight ahead of her. The two little boys played with blocks at her feet. The mother's look was deep and intense, as if she were regarding some fearful drama.

"Gessia," said John, "what is the matter?" His voice trembled until it surprised him.

She looked slowly round as if recovering from a dream.

"Oh," she said; "I was thinking."

"But you ought not to think so much, Gessia. You



are not strong anyhow, and you think on such gloomy subjects that you worry yourself."

"Why should I not think?" she said, wearily. "After all, one had better think of a horror than to suffer it; it always gains some terror, however little, by becoming a fact."

"Oh, Gessia, don't be so gloomy. I've done wrong, and I admit it. Why can't you forgive me?"

"I do," said the wife, quietly; but the gloom upon her face was as heavy as ever.

"Then don't look that way; cheer up and be happy."

"That I can never do. I know that I have forgiven you, because I have ceased to harbor resentment; but my chance of happiness is lost forever."

"Oh, *Gessia*;" he half sobbed. "Why cannot you give up when you know that I have repented?"

"John," she said; "I do not want to seem hard-hearted, but it is as I say. I can never be happy. Your repentance becomes you, and you are dearer to me because of it; but no amount of repentance can destroy the effects of a wrong once done. The time to repent for an evil deed is before it is committed. Do not think that I undervalue your repentance—I do not—it is the best you can do now; but as to its practical utility, it is quite as useless as that of the murderer after he has drawn the life blood from his victim. No amount of remorse can call back the life once taken, and no ocean of repentant tears can cement again the fibres of a broken heart."

"But there's one thing I can not understand," said John. "Lots of men have done far worse than I have, and yet have lived happily. I do not see why I should be miserable always just for that little mistake."

"You should indeed be happy, for a life-misery is in nearly all cases a mistake; but not with such as I. You should have taken one of your own kind; one who like yourself was stained. It is not right for such as you to wed with such as I, and the custom of a thousand ages can not make it so. If indeed you were determined to have a pure woman, you should have told her plainly that you were unclean, and given her the chance of withdrawing before she was bound. If you had told me before marriage, I would at least have given you the credit for being honest; but now I can only pity you as a deeply erring man. As to what you say concerning others being



worse than you and yet being happy, I can only say this. It is natural for us to point to some one who is more persistent in his sins than ourselves, and say that he is worse than we are. But is he? Have we a right to make grades in the same crime? Perhaps the very moral sense which restrained us—which permitted us to sin only to a limited extent—was entirely absent from our brother who sinned to excess. In that case we are far worse than he, for we sinned in spite of the warning voice that called upon us to refrain. We cannot conscientiously blame a sinner unless we be wholly free from his sin."

"But, Gessia—we must—you must—allow for the teachings of the world."

"If all men from the beginning of time had listened and yielded to the teachings of the world, there would have been no advancement, no law. We all listen to both good and evil advice, and it is only he who rejects the bad, accepts the good, and adds to it new dignity by his own determined morality, that is worthy to be a teacher of his fellow men or a companion for a virtuous person. Perhaps we may receive more evil counsel than good; and because this is so, we must ourselves learn to distinguish the false from the true. Therein lies our only protection from sin; and the ability so to distinguish, constitutes the difference between the saint and the criminal. I know as well as you that chances and opportunities are all unequal—that the man with careless or criminal parents can not have the advantages of the one with a virtuous and holy mother; but even after making all these allowances we must admit that it is not right for the virtuous and the vicious to wed together. They can only make each other unhappy. They breathe different atmospheres; and the good can no more understand the moral apathy of the bad, than the bad can appreciate the sublime heroism of his companion. If any real companionship be reached, it must in nearly all cases be arrived at by the fine one growing coarse; it is not likely that the heart that has grown up in an atmosphere of callousness and vice should change. Though outward influences may cause the offender to throw a veil around his defects of heart and soul, still they are there, and there they will be forever. In youth, the world's heroes are made or marred."



“According to that, Gessia, the mothers of men might make the race divine if they wished to.”

“The mothers of our race are made what they are by our civilization. That institution demands that a large number of the women shall cease to have family ties, and exist only to cool the lust of the males; it demands that those who remain pure shall be comparatively ignorant, shall paint their faces, study naught but drudgery and dress, and devote their energies to catch a husband, regardless of his morals or his mental. No matter how bad, how worthless, how improvident the man she marries, she is considered more honorable so married, than to be ever so noble and intelligent in spinsterhood. That same civilization demands that after marriage she shall listen smilingly to the story of her husband's shame, and consent to bear and rear up children whose very birth is a disgrace. She must not allow her mind to drift to politics, morals, or great questions of state, on pain of being called strong-minded. She must only interest herself in the fashion plate or in the neighborhood scandal; she obeys these hideous rules, for society presses her to them. What is she? Her virtues are the virtues of dependents and underlings, and her faults are the faults of slaves. Her virtues are submission and weakness; and her faults are love of scandal, deceit, and small dishonesties. She is what your civilization has made her. Judge, yourself, of her ability to train youth. But amid all this evil teaching, all the links of tyrannic custom's chain have not completely held her down. A few women are always found who are struggling against the adverse waves of public opinion, and bringing up noble children.

“Such a state of society as ours—a state in which the members of one sex must march from the cradle to the grave carrying the brand of a hopeless inferiority, limitation of privilege, and under a constant and galling surveillance not visited upon their so called superiors, is a failure, and a mockery to the name of civilization. Such a sex had better pass out of existence—such creatures had better become extinct. It were far better that there be no nerves, than that nerves exist only to quiver at continual pain; better that there be no feminine minds than that they exist only to suffer endless persecution.

“Under such a system as ours, no wise person can mourn the death of a female child. Death is the greatest blessing



that can crown her. Should she live, she is in danger of ending her days in one of your licensed hells; she is in constant danger of insult and ruin from those you call her protectors; she is in danger of what you consider the disgrace of spinsterhood. If she should be compelled to earn her bread she must take less wages than she would get if she were a man; if she marries, she must become an accessory to some man's shame. The world holds nothing for her; the grave is her only home."

"Oh, I know, Gessia, that the women do have a hard time; I'm sorry for them. I'd like to see them treated better; but then I think they ought to be satisfied with their place in the home, provided, of course, they're treated well."

"So do I. Woman cannot possibly ask any higher station than the home, provided it *is* a home, and not a prison. Marriage is her sphere, and every woman should be a wife and mother, just as every man should be a husband and father; and were our civilization what it should be, this would be possible. Marriage should be the loftiest of earthly possibilities. It should be holy and eternal; it should be a union so perfect that the united pair could laugh in derision at the poisoned arrows of slander and smile at the reverses of fate. It should be broken by nothing but death, and even this should never cause a loved one to pass into nothingness. It should be the republic of love, where tyranny is a locked out stranger, and where shame and suspicion never enter. If one companion wish the subjection of the other, why not bring it about through perfect love and not with the tyranny, 'I am stronger than thou.' But the marriage of unequals, such as our civilization encourages, is a prison, where dungeon bars let in the struggling light to tell us of the happiness and liberty left behind. The portals of marriage are wreathed with flowers, but we pass within and find the woe and hopelessness of the tomb, where the air is heavy with the stench of dead, decaying love. But we must submit; society and custom force us through the portals—we must enter, or stand mocked and ridiculed without. Neither nobility of heart, nor grace of mind, can make the world forget that we are women."

"But, Gessia, you must admit that women are inferior to men mentally. With only a few exceptions, they have never been great in philosophy, mathematics or letters.



No one would expect to see a female Bacon or Shakespeare. I am afraid, Gessia, that they are inferiors in some ways."

"I am not afraid of it," said Gessia, sadly; "I *know* it. Our parents, the laws of our country, the customs of ages, have made us so. From our very cradles we have been restrained and held back. Our education has been hampered and curtailed in every possible manner; weaknesses and trivialities have been bred into us for ages. Who would look for the greatest mental lights of a nation among its slaves, its dependents, or at best its petted children? Though the seed of intellect be ever so strong it cannot flourish without warmth and light and room. A few women who have had a small allowance of these genial provisions have become mental giants, and what argument have you to offer why more of them should not? Yes, in spite of the efforts of custom to hold us back, we have occasionally struggled to the front, and that to, in every profession. With all the claims of custom and all the shackles of tradition upon us, you have not always been able to keep ahead; give us equality before the law, and then you will cease to taunt us with the inferiority that will no longer shadow us. You fear to do this. The college prizes that are passing out of your hands, and the eminence we are attaining in the professions, make you tremble for your boasted superiority."

"Oh, I know that the women haven't had a fair chance, but then we can't help that. This matter about our home interests me more. I can't believe it's right that we should be miserable always for what has passed. I think that when I repent that I ought to be forgiven and made happy. When it's impossible to stop a bad thing, the best way is to go on and pay no attention to it."

"A great wrong grows from inattention. It seizes upon the apathy of the public as the opportunity to become strong, so that it may have power to resist public opinion should it awaken. It must be unmasked and held up to the gaze of men, where its hideousness will be an argument in favor of its destruction, even though its fangs strike death to those who strip off its mask. The hydra must be strangled—its heads must be wrested off and its necks singed with the flame of public indignation, ere it dies.

"As to your repentance, if it could drown the memory of impure associations, if it could remove the pollution from your touch, I could again be happy. Your repentance



renders you holy, but it is a distant holiness ; my joy at it is more like rejoicing that a beloved friend, who had gone astray, has returned, than like a love for a husband who is to be worshiped as a hero and looked up to as a moral guide. All your kindness to me cannot right your wrongs to those other women. You are not, and never can be, what you were before your fall. I for one, do not love the parable of the prodigal son. It was right that the sinner be taken back, that he be forgiven if he sincerely wished to improve ; but it was not right that he be made the equal or the superior of him who went not astray. No amount of repentance can bring back the life the murderer has destroyed, or put back in empty veins the blood he has shed ; or re-instate in the heart of the maiden the purity the seducer has sullied. I believe that that one story, with the encouragement it has had from thoughtless persons, has ruined thousands who halted between evil and good, and hundreds who sinned against will and conscience, merely because it was the popular thing to do."

"O, Gessia, I know it!" wailed her husband. "The truth is, we men have always had the power and we have used it like brutes. And what you said about the influence of others leading men astray, is too true. When I first told you this, I tried to brave it out and pretend it was necessary. I never uttered a worse slander upon truth. I have seen plenty of men who loved vice, but I was not one of them. I know that no girl ever left the scene of her first shame with more fierce self-reproach and regret than did I. I despised myself, and it was useless to try to quiet my conscience by assuring myself that I had a right to do as others did. But because my companions so commanded, I kept on with my sin, and talked loudly in favor of brutal license. I was a coward and a weakling, and my remorse will last as long as my life ; and the foulest Hell I can picture is an eternity of the memory that has become a torture to me.

"But Gessia, it is I who ought to suffer, and not you. I know that I am a disgrace to you, but you are killing yourself with worrying about me, and I am not worthy of your lightest thought."

Gessia heaved a long sigh. Finally she said : "John, I believe it is far harder to survive the death of faith in those we love, than it would be to survive their personal loss. The grave is fearful—but it is no crime, no dis-



grace." Then she came and sat upon his knee and pressed her lips to his face—the first willing caress she had given him since he had made his revelation. He pressed her in his arms and groaned aloud.

"O, Gessia, don't worry so," he pleaded. "This fine moral sentiment can only make you miserable."

She looked up at him; her great eyes overflowed with tears that coursed down her wasted cheeks. She pressed her thin hand against his face and said:

"The fine moral sentiment you speak of is our only hope for improvement; it is ridiculed by one generation, persecuted by the next, tolerated by the next, it becomes public opinion for the next, and finally it becomes law. Some must suffer in the fires of persecution in every age that the next age may be nobler and holier. If we coolly accept the indulgences and pleasures that the world prepares for us, without asking whom they punish, incommode, or destroy, we may indeed be innocent of criminal intention, but we are in reality, unthinking despots. He who thinks only of the present can be neither patriot nor philanthropist; he who would benefit mankind must look more to to-morrow than to to-day."

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### REST.

LET the reader pause before he pronounces Gessia Solomon hard-hearted or unforgiving. She felt very much as a high-minded, virtuous man would have felt, had he found himself deceived by and married to a stale article of womanhood. She felt that she ought to forgive the one who had wronged her; but she was not ready to accept the position of rival to the fallen. She would have rejoiced to stand at a distance and see John happy and contented with some one of the creatures who had the best right to him; but she did not feel that her forgiveness should be made to lower herself. She was certainly a fool, because she insisted upon what, in our present glorious state of civilization, is well-nigh impossible; but



she was a sweet and tender-hearted fool, who mourned far more than she hated.

She believed that if our civilization pause where it is, that it is a misfortune rather than a benefit; that it was better for man to browse off of the leaves and eat of the uncooked fruit of trees, and shiver uncovered at the fierce breath of winter, regardless alike of the future and the past, unknown to shame and ignorant of virtue, than to be educated up to a point that renders intense suffering possible, and live under a system that makes such suffering unavoidable. She believed that when once the foundation of a noble mansion is laid, that the workmen should toil unceasingly until the last tile is firmly fitted upon the roof. She saw no good to come from laying marble floors, erecting splendid pillars, covering lofty walls with rare painting and fresco, fashioning curious woods into grand finishings and placing fairy-like statues within, only to leave all uncovered to summer's alternate rain and sun, and to winter's icy breath. And if the senseless, unfeeling stone and wood should be sheltered, how much more does the noble, heroic soul, with all its capacity for anguish and suffering, need protection. Better that the house be not builded than that it be abandoned just in time to insure its spoliation; and better that civilization had not begun, than that it pause just in time to insure infinite misery to the noble and sensitive. She also believed that no matter how grand humanity might in future become, that it could still find room for improvement, and that he who announced that no further progress could be made, would be a deeply-mistaken man.

She believed that in such a system as ours, where there is no effort made to make the bridegroom fit for marriage, that a happy union is merely an accident, and that such accidents are exceedingly rare. She believed that there are direct causes for all effects, and that all the sad-faced wives who so often fill untimely graves, all the irritable, impatient, vicious, children are the natural outcome of a system which encourages the husband and father to boast his shame.

Gessia was failing fast; her face could grow no whiter but it was growing thinner; her yellow hair had faded—it had become ashen. Her step was lighter and slower. John watched her narrowly; what if after all it should



happen? He cried aloud in anguish at the very thought, and his life rose before him like a fiendish drama. When we see our mean and thoughtless acts arming themselves to attack us, to lay waste our hopes, or to destroy that which we would cherish, we would gladly call them back—we do not care to read the last chapters of their history. We thought that because it was we who committed them that there would be a savor of romance and independence about them—they would save us from being considered slow—their effect would be altogether different from what it would have been had our neighbor, John Smith, committed them; because, you know, John had no discernment, and did not know how to manage. We are inclined to lose some of our abundant faith in ourselves, when, in after years, we learn that John worried along about as well as we did.

The horrible fear that Ike Ransom's teachings might prove a total failure arose again before the pasture fence was finished; again John Solomon threw down his tools and hurried to the house. He found Gessia tottering over the floor attending to her baking; he sprang forward and caught the stooping figure in his arms; then old memories crowded up—memories of that sweet, last time when he had felt her soft arm about his neck and her warm breath against his cheek; he groaned and sobbed and called down bitter curses upon his head, and felt, to its fullest extent, the anguish of him who battles for the impossible.

"Gessia," he said, as soon as he could control his voice, "you must quit working. I am going to get a girl to do the work this very day."

"Yes, John," she answered, softly, as her head sunk upon his shoulder, "you may. I am too weak to work."

"Oh, Gessia, I'd have got one long ago, if you had let me."

"I am willing now. I am so tired."

"You must lie down, and I will finish dinner," he said, as he lifted her in his arms and bore her into the bedroom. She did not answer, but as he placed her upon the bed and arranged the pillow and clothes for her comfort, she smiled sadly, as if to thank him.

"Oh! Oh!" she murmured, as she raised her thin hand to stroke his sleeve.

"What is it, darling?" But the answer was only a repetition of that groan, as if it were a last effort to sup-



press the thought of the might have been. Then she wearily closed her eyes, and fell into a heavy sleep.

John wrestled with the kitchen work until he had prepared a sort of dinner for the hired man; then without eating a mouthful, he called in Sallie Hatton to look after things, and hurried to town. Let us not give the name of cruelty to that feeling which prompts us to seek to prolong the life which can only be miserable. We hope that something will happen to prevent us looking on at the last scene of our thoughtless drama. But we may not recall the past, and since what is now the present will one day be the past, let us struggle to keep its page spotless.

John brought out his mother, a physician, and a hired girl. He had great faith in his mother theoretically, and none at all practically. He had received so much valuable advice from his parents, his books, and the world generally, concerning his duty to his mother, that he was exceedingly anxious to treat her well, though personally she was quite disagreeable to him. He never wanted her to hear of any of his misdeeds, as they might hurt her pride; though he had been able to boast of them with the greatest freedom to the being who depended upon him for all her earthly bliss. At the time of his marriage he had impressed upon Gessia's mind, with great firmness, the fact that he wished her to be kind and forbearing to his mother. He began now to think that if the world should make some little endeavor to teach a man kindness to his wife, that the effect might be wholesome; he thought that perhaps his mother had depended upon his father for the greater share of her happiness, and that her son might have been an after-consideration. He remembered that when he married, he had thought far more of the happiness he might obtain through the union with Gessia than of that to be realized from the children of the union. Then many women died while their sons were in their infancy—in that case would a little kindness from their husbands be totally lost? Again, the mother must always be more or less responsible for the disrespect of her son, and in some cases might be supposed to deserve a little of it; but the bride has had no hand in the bringing-up of her bridegroom, and certainly deserves no ill-treatment until she has done something to merit it. Might not a little of the literature that bespeaks in so earnest a tone respect for the mother, be spared to the cause of the wife? Should not a young man be taught



to make himself worthy of a good wife as well as to be kind and respectful to a good mother?

It is painful to a woman—a real woman—to contemplate a thoroughly callous and hardened female of the respectable class, such as our system produces by thousands. Mrs. Solomon senior was such a woman; her morals consisted in fear of what people would say; her life-study was what “they” were wearing; her sympathy all clustered round the wealthy and the popular. She had not the slightest idea of a noble moral standard; she was a woman of the world. She wanted John and Gessia to live on their ranch until by hard work they had accumulated a large fortune; then they were to move to Milroy City, build a fine house, keep servants, and put on style in a manner to reflect glory upon her.

She was much disappointed to hear of Gessia’s illness; now there would be a big doctor bill to pay, a girl to hire, and the girl would waste things; so that the moving to town would be delayed. Then there was no credit to be obtained from keeping a hired girl in the country—no one would hear of it; why couldn’t Gessia have stayed well till she got to Milroy City, where everyone would learn that she was able to keep a servant? Gessia ought to look after herself better;—so far as she was concerned, she never did like the match, but then John wouldn’t take her advice. She intended to give Gessia a good talking to about taking care of herself—there was no telling the money she might cost John if she kept on being sick.

As we have said, John’s personal affection for his mother was very small. She had kept his clothes clean, had fed him well, and had sent him to school; she had also sent him out to play so she could gossip and embroider to better purpose. But he ransacked his mind in vain for the memory of a time when she had taken him upon her knee, and talked to him, as only a mother can, of his duty to others, of the rights of the weak, and of the subtle dangers that beset the mind and heart of youth on every hand. He remembered his own natural modesty, and thought how a word from his mother, spoken at the right time, might have saved for happiness the sinking partner of his life. His mother had failed of her duty, and another was dying because thereof. But wait—society had also failed in its duty to his mother; it had not required her to be better than she was.



The doctor pronounced Gessia's trouble nervous prostration;—he recommended complete rest and entire absence of excitement. The elder Mrs. Solomon, however, had a different opinion—it was a plan to shirk the summer's work.

Gessia slept quietly all night, but when John awoke in the morning she was awake; there was almost a smile upon her face.

“What are you thinking about, dear?” he asked.

“I am studying the problem of life,” she said. “I cannot believe, John, that things are to be this way always. I can see a glimpse of a time, far in the future, when women can walk and talk with men and feel themselves indeed protected; when wit shall take the place of coarseness, and when honest mirth shall succeed lewdness; when this coarse sin shall be forgotten, and when every human creature shall rejoice in married love. Oh, John, I feel that however much our secret and wicked thoughts may wander, that we can only gain excellence, only improve ourselves and our race, by resolute self-conquest, and by controlling our natures instead of allowing them to control us. Those thoughts, those passions, we have inherited from beasts—we must conquer them or they will conquer us. After one partner in the holy marriage union has admitted to the other that he has even thought of another person, other than the wedded one, in the light of the relation that belongs to marriage alone, there can never more be a perfect love, a perfect union. Sorrow and bitterness will reign in the listener's bosom, however resolutely she may battle to keep them in subjection; it is but nature that the wedded one should wish to be the first and only one. Oh, if woman could reign supreme in the hearts of her husband and children she need ask no other empire. And Oh, John, in the future which I am afraid will be dark for you, use your strength to help lift the yoke from our necks; it is not the ballot I ask you to work for—let others interest themselves in that if they will—but do try to do what you can to stop this pollution of the home. Think how vice makes women suffer; think how—”

“Oh, *Gessia*! Now you know you are not fit to talk; just consider a little; how much do you suppose I will care for life if you are not here?”

“There was a time when you did without me; the



time is coming again. I have given you only sorrow and this I deeply regret; but I have loved you as I never loved another creature. My sorrow at what you did was part of my nature; I have suffered fearfully, but I had rather suffer it all ten times over than to know myself hard and callous and unfeeling. I have said cruel things to you—I am sorry for them, for they wounded you and did no good; but if you had known how I was suffering, you would have thought them mild. I can see that in such a world as this, I had no right to such opinions—that they have only made me suffer; but, John, I would rather have been the martyr standing chained to the stake, with the breath of flame about me, than to have been one of the hooting, jeering multitude who looked on and mocked and kissed and reviled.”

“Gessia, you are just giving up; you are not trying to live; I am going right after the doctor,” said John, as he hurriedly began to dress. Then he added: “Tell me something I can do for you, Gessia; anything—just anything!”

“I would like to see Mr. and Mrs. Blakesly.”

“Oh, dear! Mother will make such a fuss. But never mind,” he added, hurriedly; “you shall see them, if it raises the roof. I’ll go right off after breakfast.”

When he entered the kitchen he found his mother guiding the hired girl in the preparation of breakfast. He resolved to fight his battle in the early morning while his courage was sure.

“How is Gessia?” asked his mother, shortly.

“She is about the same; and I’m going after Mr. and Mrs. Blakesly as soon as breakfast is over.”

“Why, John,” she said, in a high key, “everybody’ll just talk.”

“Let ’em talk and be d—d!” said John, in a moment of uncontrollable enthusiasm.

“That’s a nice way to talk to your mother! And I’ll not stay in the house if they come here. The kind of places they go to!”

“Well, mother, I did wrong to speak so to you, but then I shall do as Gessia likes in this matter. It is she who wants to talk to them, and she never desired a wrong thing in her life.”

“Gessia is great works! Lying around sick a-wasting your property! Your mother isn’t anything!”



John felt very much like saying that if his mother had done her duty he would have been a far different man, and Gessia a happy, useful woman; but he kept silence—she was his mother; he hurried away to attend to his feeding. When he returned, he found his mother recovered of her ill-humor.

“Did you intend to go for Mr. Blakesly yourself, or did you think of sending some one?” she asked.

“I intend to go myself.”

“Well, maybe you had better stay with Gessia. I ought to go home this morning to water my geraniums; your hired man could take me in, and we could bring the Blakeslys out, if you are determined to have them.”

“Very well. That will suit me,” said John. He then advanced to the table and filled a plate with food and carried it into the bed-room, whither he was followed by his mother. The two children had awakened. Ralph had climbed upon his mother’s bed, and little Henry was out of his trundle-bed, crying because he could not climb up also.

“How do you find yourself this morning, Gessia?” asked the elder Mrs. Solomon, sharply.

“Oh, I am so tired,” was the quiet answer.

“Well, now, eat some breakfast. I saw that it was cooked right. Eat a good meal now, and then get up and take some exercise. If you just give up, you are liable to lie there all summer.”

“No, not here—not here,” was the quiet answer. But the hard old woman did not understand.

“Then eat something, and try to do something for yourself,” she said.

“Mother,” said John, sternly, “the doctor said she was not to be excited.”

“Oh, well, look after your sick yourself, then. I see you don’t want *me*,” and the old woman swept out of the room and took up her quarters in the kitchen, where she at once began to make things lively for the hired girl.

Gessia ate but little breakfast, but she thanked her husband with her eyes when he arranged her pillow and bathed her face with some of the cool water from the spring.

“I am afraid the children will want to be on the bed with me again to-day,” she said, “and of course I had rather have them here than to have them cry. But watch



them, John, and do not let them play too rough; I am so weak, and my very flesh seems sore. Poor little things!" she added, with a tremulous sigh; then she sank back on her pillow.

The elder Mrs. Solomon was off for town early; she was very cheerful, for she had a great scheme in her mind. Since John and Gessia were young and foolish and did not know what they wanted nor what was best for them, she would take the reins of government in her own hands for a brief season. She did not intend to have her family disgraced for all time to come by calling in the Blakeslys to talk to her daughter-in-law when she was sick. No, indeed! She would bring her own minister, the eminently respectable Mr. Sharp; and she felt very proud to think how she was saving her son's credit. It happened that she and the hired man and the Rev. Mr. Sharp—another hired man—hired to preach the gospel of humility while he was a proud tyrant at heart—arrived at the ranch just as dinner was being placed on the table.

John was surprised when he saw the Rev. Sharp, but of course he did not doubt his mother.

"Was Mr. Blakesly sick?" he asked, in a low tone, as he drew his mother aside.

Mrs. Solomon perked up her face. "I don't know whether he was or not," she said. "I don't pay any attention to such as him. He don't act respectable, and I I brought out a man that does."

"Do you call this truth, religion, honesty, mother?" he asked, bitterly.

"I am not arguing that; I'm not going to have a man that isn't respectable around where I am, and that's all there is to it," she snapped as she went into the parlor, where Mr. Sharp was brushing his shining black silk hat.

Our own little peculiarities never show themselves to us in such an unlovely light as when we see them displayed in those around us. John had deceived and tyrannized over his wife under the impression that he was making her more capable of enjoying life; but when his mother tried the same plan with him it did not take him quite so long a time to perceive the error. An individual can very frequently make an effective study of his own meanness from two sources outside himself—his parents and his children. When he sees his deception, dishonesty, or vice displayed in his mother, it is a particularly disagreeable sub-



ject to contemplate; and when he sees his elegant money-catching or social conquest lie, developing into the wildest genius for mendacity in his eldest son, or his much-loved sexual sins cropping out in his petted daughter, the subject becomes still more unpleasant. It has never occurred to him that by carefully trying to improve his mother's son he might also improve his children's father, and through him, his children. John Solomon, like a very large number of his brother mortals, had a peculiar talent for observing the truth after it was too late for him to receive benefit from it.

"Sit up to dinner, everybody," shouted John, from the kitchen. "I'm not feeling well and do not want to eat." Then as the alien company drew around the table he went into the bed-room with a lowering brow.

"Gessia," he said, hoarsely, "mother has tricked us, and has brought out that old reprobate that preaches souls to Hell in her church; if you don't want to see him, you need not. I'll stand by you." Then he told the whole story. A little of the old playfulness that years ago had lighted up her face, returned to it. "He is in our house," she said, "and we must not be rude. I'll see him. He will probably make some amusement for me." The two children, with their hands full of bread and butter, nestled close to their mother, and John was alone with his family and the bitter tortures of his soul. Aliens were in his house—were at his table—his own ill-starred family was crowded to the wall—and all seemed but a foreshadowing of a future filled with horrible facts and frightful memories. And yet—Oh, we might tramp our dreary deserts with more strength and courage, were it not for the green pastures of the mirage, ever floating before us, taunting, maddening, and bewildering our senses—which we know we will never reach, never enjoy—the sweet and delusive might-have-been.

In the course of half an hour there came a rustling sound, followed by the entrance of Mrs. Solomon and the Rev. Sharp. The latter had been warned by the former that Gessia needed advice concerning energy for this life; but Mr. Sharp had had a good dinner, and just after a square meal he found it impossible to view favorably the misfortunes of anyone else—why did not they look after themselves as well as he looked after himself? He advanced to the bed and shook hands.



"Sister Solomon," he said, very gravely, I am very sorry to see you looking so pale and thin. Have you reconciled your soul to God?"

"I am afraid not," answered Gessia, with a little of her old playful spirit.

"Then, my sister, it is high time you did so. God is merciful to those who repent their sins, but those who refuse to acknowledge their guilt are visited with eternal banishment from his presence. Hell is not so full to-day of criminals, as of unrepentant sinners."

"And what is your objection to hell?" she asked, with a quiet smile.

"Hell is a place of fearful suffering, of endless misery, of weeping and wailing and woe."

"You have given an excellent description of earth. Do you think hell is any worse than this world?" she asked, quietly.

"Madame, you blaspheme!" he shrieked. "Hell is the place that God has set apart for the punishment of the damned. And he will punish fearfully those who revile his holy religion."

"If," said Gessia, as the playfulness left her face, "if it is any worse than this world, any fuller of injustice, of wailing cries of the helpless, of outraged, crushed humanity, of proud, regnant, triumphant crime, I should like to see it, just as a matter of curiosity. But," she added as heavy shadows darkened her face, "I do not believe it. I do not believe that a God of infinite goodness ever fashioned for the punishment of his creatures a place more horrible than this. For here, life holds out bright prospects, fair as roses and pure as violets; but when we grasp them, we find that the roses hide thorns that pierce us to the heart, and the violets conceal serpents that sting us to death. I am tired; let me sleep."

There was nothing for the discomfited aliens to do but to withdraw, and they withdrew.

The Rev. Mr. Sharp went home as fast as the hired man could drive the horses, and the elder Mrs. Solomon, who was angry at the treatment received by her pastor, went also. She would attend to her geraniums in future, and not bother her head about such an ungrateful creature as John's wife.

Gessia slept. The children played about on the bed or took little naps beside their pallid mother. John sat and



watched it all and wondered if the world held many such tragedies as this, or many such criminals as himself.

Just as the sun was setting, Gessia awoke. "I did wrong to talk to the minister that way, John," she said, "but when he came in, I got to thinking over his career and it made me loathe him. How he worked all last winter, and begged money from people whose children did not have enough clothes to wear, just to build the spire of his church higher; putting money into stone and mortar and iron while humanity was crying, within hearing of his pulpit, for bread to eat! He did not even give the work to a man who was in need."

John passed his hand over his face, as a heavy frown swept his brow.

"Yes, and there is another thing he did, Gessia," he said; then he paused.

"What was it, dear?"

"Don't ask me to tell you; I ought not to have mentioned it. I did not think when I spoke; you have enough on your mind, already. The world is a most accursed place."

"It is a selfish and thoughtless place, dear; sometimes I think that all it needs is to have its attention called to its sins. I know one man who was once selfish and thoughtless, who has become a hero," she added, as she put out her thin hand to clasp that of her husband. John buried his face in her pillow.

The shortcoming on the part of the Rev. Sharp which he had thought best not to detail to Gessia, was as follows: Milroy City had managed to worry along without a dance-house some four years after the departure of Mrs. Sue Brown for parts unknown. But finally an institution of the sort was deemed necessary and one was duly licensed by the honorable city council. The women, weary of the nights of foul revel and the days of exhaustion, ennui, and remorse that followed, occasionally changed the tedium of their existence for gallops on horseback in the daytime and attendance at such concerts and plays as the little city afforded in the evening. Now, Mr. Sharp had two exceedingly stylish and virtuous daughters, who occasionally went out for a canter on horseback, and who made a point of attending all the evening entertainments. Mr. Sharp thought the matter over and went to the honorable city council. He did not implore that body to



abolish the dance-house—oh, no—it was one of the features of our high civilization; but he did implore the members to pass an ordinance preventing the attendance of the inmates at evening entertainments, and also their appearance on horseback. Mr. Sharp entirely forgot to ask for any curtailment of the privileges or liberties of the masculine rakes, gamblers, brothel frequenters, or seducers who were quite plentiful in Milroy City, and who, if there be proof in result, were quite persistent in spreading their doctrines. Their liberty must of course not be interfered with. Personal liberty is a great boon. No, if Mr. Sharp could succeed in stopping a few of the innocent pleasures of an unfortunate and down-trodden class, he was wholly satisfied; and when the council agreed to his propositions he looked upon himself as a very Martin Luther of reformation.

Now John, having lived with a fool for about five years, was himself becoming somewhat foolish. He thought the matter over, and came to the conclusion that the proper way to fight the dance-house was to refuse to license it. He concluded that the absence of the women from the evening entertainments and from the saddle did but little good so long as they were permitted to remain in the city. Debarring them from innocent amusement would make them still more dissatisfied with the system of which they were the victims, and if they had any spirit, as they usually had, their warfare against society would be more persistent than ever. He thought they could do just as much harm walking the streets as they could on horseback or in the theatre; then he had come to the fearful conclusion that it was wrong to make a law which curtailed the privileges of the evil members of one sex without also nipping a few of the liberties of the other. He thought that if Mr. Sharp had employed his eloquence to persuade the honorable city council to revoke the brothel license, that things might have been better. In short, he was becoming quite foolish. But he did not want to detail the matter to Gessia; she had trouble enough.

Gessia became cheerful as the evening wore on; she laughed softly and talked of old times—of the parties they had attended—of the old home in the East—of her trip out West and her adventures on the train. Then again she slept, but she left John cheerful and hopeful—after all it was going to be well with him. She was getting better



and they would still be joyous and gay. He responded to the supper call and ate heartily. He even succeeded in getting the children to the table and out for a romp afterward; and he was so smiling and light-hearted, that for once they did not shrink from him. When he returned to the bed-room the light was burning. Gessia still slept heavily. He put Ralph to bed and then rocked little Henry to sleep. His cheer was very great; perhaps even the children would come to love him yet. With a light heart he sat down to read the paper. The news all seemed fresh and crisp, and the world began to look bright and hopeful again. It was blowing over at last—his storms always did blow over, just give them time enough. He was deeply interested in the financial outlook when he heard that soft voice call from the bed:

“John.”

He was at her side in a moment.

“What is it, dear?” he asked.

“Please raise my pillow a little. Do you know, John, I’ve been thinking again about the old time—about when we used to ride the two grays over the hills. Do you remember when we went up to see the graves of those men that the Indians killed, away up on the Black Mountain? The air was so sweet and cool, and the snow was so white on Bernalillo. It was so steep, we had to get off of the horses and climb. You were used to climbing and I was not; you led both the horses, and took my hand to help me; and I thought what a strong hand it was—how I would like to hold it always—to depend on it always for strength and support. Take the boys sometime over the dear old paths, and tell them that their mamma loved the hills, the lakes, and the tall pines. Tell them to be good men, John, to be kind to weak, helpless creatures, and never to forget the unfortunate and the sorrowful. And now lay me down; kiss me first—I am so tired—I must sleep—I loved you, John—I never loved anyone else so well—there, now—put me down easily—I must sleep.” She sank back on her pillow; her faint breath swept his cheek just once; and she who had resisted the ways of the world was dead.

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When we make up our minds to commit a mean act there are several chances against us which we carefully consider; these are, what people will say, whether we will



sustain personal injury, and the possibility of our not clearing the law; the one we do not consider is the fact that we will have all the remainder of our lives in which to repent. We start out in life; one of the first truths taught us is that we must die; the next that we can go through life but once. And yet the very social system that teaches us these truths, encourages us in our youth, to sow dragon's teeth that shall spring into armed warriors, who will make of our lives eternal battle-fields, covered with the bones of dead hopes, and dismal with the cries of virtues wounded unto death. Those who teach us so, say that since we can live but once, we should enjoy. That is true; we should enjoy. We are capable of the highest enjoyment, and we should realize it; but do we? Is not the average life far better acquainted with misery than with pleasure? Do thoughtlessness, excess, cruelty, tyranny, and selfishness, produce pleasure? He who over-eats suffers for his gluttony. The child should be taught self-control, justice to others, caution, and the equality of mankind; then he will be able to enjoy the sweets of life without being haunted by hideous night-mares of the past. But in such a system as ours, wherein morals constitute a branch unknown in a young man's education, and where the licensed brothel is a common feature, what can we expect save fierce and beastly indulgence, fearful domestic tragedies, and heart-breaking and useless remorse? Oh, this one earthly life, with its heavy responsibilities, its inexhaustible opportunities for good and bad! What vast preparations we need for its journey! Perhaps those who crowded us out of the straight path into the marsh, where poisonous vapors infected our lives, did so because they themselves had been wronged—been defrauded of humanity's great birth-right, a humane and noble training.

It is useless to attempt a description of such remorse and anguish as visited John Solomon; we, whose crimes and mistakes have brought home their harvest and laid their last bitter fruits at our feet, can understand. Who said that dead men tell no tales? To the public, the murdered dead indeed keeps silence; but there is one to whom his voice is never still. To his destroyer he is ever present, and his blood incessantly calls aloud. It will whisper in his ear when he is laughing and singing over his wine, and will become a shriek to drive slumber away from his pillow at night. The night lamp will not drive the in-



vader away; the dread form, with its pallid lips and wildly-staring eyes, will come forward out of shadows, pointing to its death wound and mocking its murderer's efforts for peace.

. . . . .

John Solomon sat beside a stiff and sheeted form, wildly cursing himself and the world. The two children, who could not understand why they were drawn back when they wished to climb up and play beside their mother, were a reminder to him that he could not take refuge in self-destruction. He was chained to earth—to years of loneliness, self-loathing, and remorse. He was a father—a father of children hopelessly wronged, but who must be fed and protected and taught. Taught? Their teacher had flown. She had prepared herself by years of training to be their teacher, but earth's system had killed her, and she lay still and cold, an object of curiosity and wonder to her pupils.

Oh, Death! Oh, eager questioning heart, answer the query thou hast put forward! Is this all? Is the white and stiffening clay, soon to return to its parent dust, all that is left of the beauty, the nobility, the intelligence, that once lived and laughed, sang, grieved, and loved? Did all the grace of that mind, all the rare and curious knowledge, all the sweet sympathy for mankind, pass into naught because the breath deserted the clay? If not, where are they? Is that consciousness winging about us, looking in pity at us who are still imprisoned in flesh? *She* knows the dread secrets. The portals of death have closed behind her, and she knows what is beyond. But we do not. Our heavy eyes see and understand only a few of the dingy things of earth.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### MIDNIGHT PHILOSOPHY.

THE elder Mrs. Solomon carefully balanced in her mind the occurrence that had thrown gloom over her family. It was bad, of course, for John to have to hire help for a year—it would make talk if he married in less than a year—then he would, of course, have to hire two women, or there would be more talk. But, after all, since Gessia had turned out to be weakly, perhaps it was best for her to die; perhaps, if she had lived, she would have kept on being weakly, and cost John no end of money. Maybe John would see things right now, and marry Sophia. Mrs. Solomon was exceedingly sensible; she believed in taking things as they came, and in looking at all matters from a purely business standpoint. She shed tears when she looked upon the dead; that was the proper thing to do; but there was no grief in her heart because of the splendid individuality that was lost. Then she worried a little for fear she might have to take care of the children awhile; that would be very bad because children worried her so. She bustled about the house with a business-like air that was like fire pressed against the over-tried nerves of her son. She uttered no word of apology for her deception and her abrupt withdrawal of the day before; she only said that she was surprised at Gessia dropping off so suddenly.

She was displeased because Frank and Sallie Hatton, and Hetty Ann Bales were in the house. People might talk. Why had not Ida Jane Ransom been called in to officiate, so that the splendor of that seal-skin sacque might cast its rays of glory over the gloom? She intended to have some of Ida Jane's kindred to sit up that night—Ida Jane was an Edgeworth—she would do what she could to bring back respectability; it was late now, Gessia had died the night before; still she would do what she could. That "mess of a crowd" had been in the house one night, but they should not be there another. Perhaps nothing is more galling to the sincere mourner than the utter heartlessness of the majority of those who surround him during the first hours of his grief. John's eyes followed his mother with depths of deep, growing hate; and somehow, without a word from her—such things do happen—



a suspicion of her plan for the night crossed his mind. He knew her preference for the respectable, fashionable, utterly soulless Edgeworth clan; he shuddered; what things would be said over his wife's defenceless clay! Style and scandal and brutish custom would be discussed over the ashes of that heart that had throbbed in pity for society's victims. No; the Ransoms and the Edgeworths should *not* sit with his dead. He had watched alone with her last night. Mrs. Bales and the Hattons had remained in the house, but he had sat with his beloved alone, and done bitter penance for wrongs he could never right. But what could he do now? His mother had not mentioned her plan; he had suspected it—that was all.

As he sat bitterly thinking, he noticed a figure he had not seen in his house before; it was that of the school teacher, Miss Royal. Here was hope. He arose quickly and drew her aside.

"Miss Royal," he said, in a low tone. "Will it be possible for you to stay here to-night?"

"Yes; I can stay," she answered. "I do not have to teach to-morrow; this is Friday, and there is nothing to prevent my coming."

"Very well," said John; "It is not every one that I would ask to watch with *her*. She had ill-treatment in her life—it was all wrong, but it is too late to help it now—but I do not want it continued after her death. You can ask any one you like to sit with you; I am willing to trust to your judgment; of course you will have to talk—you cannot keep awake if you do not—but then it's repulsive to think of romping and lightness about one's dead."

"I understand," said the teacher, as the tears welled into her eyes. "Are you particular as to whom I ask for company?"

"You can use your own judgment. There are always some hard-hearted people whom one would rather not have."

"I understand. I will ask Mr. Mayfair and Mr. McGaggy, and—" then she paused a moment as if choosing, "I will ask Mary McCain; she is a good-hearted, honest girl."

John looked relieved; he assented to this arrangement, and, bidding Miss Royal tell his mother of the plan, he again took his place beside his dead. He was asked to name the time of the funeral, but he bade them suit them-



selves; then he was asked who should officiate, and he said in a tone of fierce decision, and with a wild look at his mother, "Mr. Blakesly;" and his mother trembled and was still. The evening advanced; the evening of the last night that his wife was to remain under his roof; aliens, aliens, aliens, were in his home—his home no longer—they were thick about him—they lifted the face-cloth from his beloved, and looked curiously at the marble beauty; the scene was intolerable to him, and he rushed to his chamber, from whence his wife had fled forever.

The neighbors did not suspect the existence of the heart-cancer that had eaten Gessia's life away. To be sure, they had heard the gossip that had followed the honeymoon; but coarse, heavy creatures can not imagine sensibilities fine and strong enough to kill. To them, Gessia had simply turned out weakly and died. Alas! How many poor creatures find their crosses so heavy that they turn out weakly and die!

As Miss Royal returned to her boarding place, after having talked with John, she met Mr. Will Hockman, who expressed his desire to be of service in such strong terms, and explained his readiness to sit up so volubly that Miss Royal could not help accepting his offer. So when the night party arrived, he was one of the number.

Mr. Will Hockman was an individual who had great faith in himself; his bringing-up and his education were, in his eyes, quite faultless; his little social lapses, of course, did not count. He was handsome, and his manners were just such as should accompany his face. If he was just the least bit proud of his appearance we hope that that fact will not prejudice the reader against him. He had made so many conquests among the ladies he had met that he had wonderful faith in his abilities as a charmer. But Miss Eveline Royal, now. What *did* ail her taste? She actually seemed to prefer Jake Mayfair; and even if she was only a country school teacher, she was a very fine woman. Mr. Hockman thought she was worth serious consideration; it would be odd now, if this affair turned out just the opposite of his usual love affairs. But he would be vigilant; if any one was to be left sore-hearted, it should be her. When he prepared to go to the residence of John Solomon, he, like Cæsar, took precautions. He saw that his handkerchief was exquisitely perfumed, that his gloves were spotless, and that his boots were irre-



proachable. In addition to this care, he donned a most wonderful pair of cream-colored pants that had never before been exposed to the Colorado air; his linen and his broadcloth were scrupulously looked after; and with hope high in his heart, he sallied forth.

The watching party seemed to understand that Miss Royal was queen of the occasion; they took their cue of behavior from her. The party was neither boisterous nor dull; they remembered where they were, still they conversed and endeavored to entertain themselves in proper fashion. Mary McCain would have been a pretty girl if she had not begun to use face powder in her early youth; but she was still kind-hearted and companionable; her tendency to violate the rules of grammar and of taste in dress, was argument against her intrinsic goodness. Toward midnight she fell asleep in her chair and, with mouth wide open, snored vehemently. She was such a picture of content that Miss Royal thought it a pity to wake her; so she arranged her head with a view to comfort, propped back the arm-chair in which she was stationed, and let her sleep.

"There, now;" she said, laughingly, "One of us, at least, is happy."

"If I had something to eat, I'd be happier," remarked Erastus.

"You shall have; they have provided well for us," said Miss Royal.

The party were sitting in the kitchen; Miss Royal went to the pantry and began to bring out table furnishings; she handed the coffee-mill to Will Hockman, and motioned to Erastus to help arrange the table; "Mr. Mayfair, you may make a little more fire, if you will," she said to the waiting and willing Jake.

"You are cruel to set me to work," said Hockman, half-delirious with joy. "Mother didn't make such a slave of me."

"Perhaps it would have been better for you if she had," was the quiet retort.

"Why? Are there many visible defects in my character?"

"Defects are always visible, sooner or later."

"Now you are cruel; why don't you answer my question?"

"Is that coffee ready?"



"Yes, but I will not give it to you, till you answer me."

"You are a mutinous subject; I am supreme here. I will appoint Mr. Mayfair and McGaggy to seize that coffee and hold it as contraband of war. I scout your proposition to answer your question. Never will I treat with a rebellious subject."

"Well, I know it's no use arguing with a woman; take the coffee. You are victor."

"If it were possible to put salt in your share, without injuring the rest, I'd do it to punish you for delaying the feast."

The coffee was soon boiling. Miss Royal buttered a huge pile of bread, cut slices of cold beef, placed preserves and pickles on the table, sliced cake, and then announced the meal to be in readiness.

"Shall we wake Mary?" she asked.

"No," was the universal answer. Jake Mayfair, who was somewhat alarmed at the recent passage of raillery between Hockman and his beloved, added that, in this world, the people who could sleep the most were the luckiest—they didn't observe so much.

"Oh, pshaw!" said Will Hockman, with a pleased flourish, as the party drew up to the table; "people ought to see and observe; if they're not strong enough to look on at every-day happenings without flinching, why, they had better go to a better world, that's all."

"Every-day happenings?" said Jake, becoming very serious; "I've seen plenty of every-day happenings that I couldn't look upon without flinching, and what is more, I never wished to become so hardened that I could. The man who can not perceive wrong, either to himself or to his neighbor, is unsound. He who cannot perceive injustice to himself, is a sickly idiot, and he who cannot perceive wrong to his neighbor, is a cold-blooded tyrant."

"Oh, Mayfair, you don't mean what you say. Everybody cheats everybody else. It's the only way to live."

"I deny it."

"Now, look here, when you work hard and raise better stuff than McGaggy here, you get more money for it, and consequently he hasn't a fair chance."

"He has the same chance that I have. We have both earned all we have. Circumstances have doubtless cheated both of us, because they have given others better opportunities and advantages than they have us; but we have



wronged no one. We have simply done the best we could with our talents, and that every man has a right to do. If we have raised such abundance of grain that we have helped to lower the price to the producer, why we have also made it cheaper to the consumer; if all men did the best they could with their talents, produced all they could, and indulged in no vices nor spendthrift ways, refraining at the same time from trying to get rich without work, there would be fewer millionaires and fewer paupers. All men would have plenty to live on. I say it is not necessary to cheat and rob others."

"You say that every man has a right to do the best he can with his talents. What if a man's talent is a faculty for stealing?"

"Stealing is a crime and not a talent."

"You said a while ago that you and McGaggy wronged no one; I say that if you lowered the price of grain to the producer that you wronged him."

"We did not wrong him. A man can only eat, wear, and need a certain amount. Others have the same right to profit by their labor as he has to profit by his. If he is a just man and a philanthropist he sees this, and is willing for others to receive the same return that he does, for doing the same grade and amount of work that he does. It is only when he does better service that he deserves more pay. When a good man accumulates property, he uses it for the good of humanity; the part his neighbors accumulated has already gone to feed and clothe humanity; he is not injured, because, had he accumulated the part his neighbor got, he would have used it in the same way that it has already gone, that is, for the good of humanity. If the producer is a despot, he is not injured when I lower the price of his grain by competition, for had he gained the additional wealth, he would have become still more of a despot, and his power to injure others would have been greatly increased. I will have benefitted him by helping to keep down his despotism. If you insist that I injure him in the abstract, because I limit his wealth by my competition, I will insist that he who would grow wealthy off of his neighbor's starvation, is a public enemy and ought to be starved out."

"Oh, well, I don't see the use of these fine-spun theories. There is no such thing as right. We might just as well get



what we can and not question how it comes or who it crushes."

"That is the theory that my old cows act on," spoke up Erastus. "They carry it out so well that one would think they were almost human. When I feed 'em, the strongest ones rush up and eat the best of the feed and fight the weak ones off. They've about starved that old red cow I got of Bill Howells to death. Now I hold that when a lot of cows are out on the range where there's good grass, that if there's one among 'em that's too lazy to rustle and and hunt her feed, that she ought to starve; and I hold that when there's plenty of work and a man won't rustle and do it, that he ought to starve; but when I see critters with reason crowding the weak to the wall, and gobbling up everything, why I think it looks too much like my old cows. But then since it's so, the world over, I don't see any way of helping matters but to train the weak up so they'll be able to fight the strong."

"But the strong members of the human family have reason," said Miss Royal. "They ought to see that it is wrong to trample on the weak; they ought to be taught it."

"What is wrong, fair lady?" asked Hockman.

"It is that which injures another."

"What is that which injures one's self?" asked Mayfair.

"That depends. The man who injures his soul or assaults his conscience commits a crime; he who injures his body, or his earthly prospects, or permits them to be injured, may be a fool, or hero, or a martyr. Whether his course be crime, folly, heroism, or martyrdom, all depends on circumstances. If it be either of the latter, his so-called self-injury will be glory."

"Bravo!" said Erastus.

"Your explanation is very clever," said Hockman, with a winning smile. "But it shows a mind not of the present day. You should give yourself an opportunity to taste pleasure, and then you would see other glories in life than martyrdom."

"I have tasted pleasure. I intend to taste pleasure. I am not a martyr."

"You told me you had been in the school-room ever since you were seventeen."

"So I have. But I have found pleasure in duty and



pleasure again in recreation when duty was over. I never gorged myself with pleasure of any kind until it became hateful to me."

Hockman's face colored slightly. "And what is the rare pleasure you have planned for the future?" he asked. The entire quartette now colored, for all were interested. But Eveline Royal was equal to the occasion.

"I shall clear the table and wash the dishes as a first step," she said. But Hockman was not satisfied; he wanted her to talk; he was intensely interested in her. Erastus was wise; he saw that there was no hope for him, so he spent his time curbing his passion, rather than in fighting a useless battle that would betray him.

"Your opinions are a menace to your future happiness, Miss Royal," said Hockman. "They are apt to lead you into marrying some man whom you do not love, just because he answers to your set idea."

"Oh, don't worry about me," she answered, laughing and blushing. "I intend to marry the man I love, provided I can get him. When I come to marry, I shall do what I think is right; the chances of unhappiness are, I know, very numerous; but if it came to that, I should rather know that I had honestly tried to do right. That knowledge would give me some consolation. If I did wrong, and then my marriage turned out to be unhappy, as it of course would, then I would have the burden of a guilty conscience added to my other misery."

"A woman ought to love according to reason."

"I agree with you. If all women loved according to reason the race would improve considerably faster than it does."

"But you are picking me up. I mean that a sensible woman ought to love the man who is best able to advance her in the world."

"That depends on how she is to be advanced. If you mean in regard to dresses, jewelry, carriages, and that miserable sham called fashionable society, I do not agree with you. There would be only misery to me in such a life; I could love no man save one I could respect."

"You will very probably love a hypocrite." Will Hockman would not have made this uncivil speech had he not seen by the look in Miss Royal's eye that his cream-colored pants and his wonderful neck-tie were to fail of their mission.



"So far as that is concerned," said Miss Royal, "there is a great question always in my mind; a hypocrite is nauseating to me, but the question is this: is he any more of a stumbling block to progress than the man who publishes his crimes? The latter is better in one way; he does not deceive people; people will not mistake him for what he is not. But he has no respect for the sensibilities of the virtuous, and his boldness will be admired and aped by the young. His example will mislead more people than that of the former. The hypocrite, however bad he may be, pays tribute to virtue because he assumes it."

"You say a hypocrite is nauseating to you. What protection have you against one?"

"Every protection. Words are not the only publishers of crime and excess. The lines of dissipation are quick to inscribe themselves on a face; the very manner of a man betrays him. Few, indeed, are the creatures who can keep their passions, their faults, or their virtues out of their faces."

"Well, how about my face?" he asked, rather impatiently.

"Oh, that is personal. We will not discuss that." And Miss Royal laughed lightly, and proceeded to clear the table. But Hockman was not satisfied. It was some consolation to quarrel with this charming creature, if he could not make love to her.

"I tell you, Miss Royal," he went on, "the safest way for a woman to do is to let nature guide her in the choice of a husband."

"Her own nature, or the nature of the man that wants her?"

"Neither. Let the nature that prompts union of the sexes point out whom she shall take. Then no matter who that is, she will be happy. A man often feels his first impulse to leave off evil ways when he beholds the woman he loves. He is ready to fall at her feet and become a saint in return for her love. What woman with any perception would refuse a man with a fine face and a splendid physique, just because his past had been that of all manly men?"

"I do not like your idea of the term manliness; I do not consider the innumerable cowardly meannesses permitted by our civilization manliness. Manliness consists in a



course of grand and noble behavior, in spite of the contamination of the world."

"Very well. Suppose that a man has never had good teachings; he sees a woman whose love would inspire nobility in him. Ought she not to love him and save him?"

"No; if the man was bad before she knew him, he is bad at heart still, and his evil nature will come out sooner or later. If he promise to reform because she has attracted him, the feeling is not so much a desire to improve, as it is servility to a conqueror. All women despise servility, while they as universally honor incorruptible integrity."

"Think a moment, Miss Logic, you said 'all women.'"

"And I meant 'all women.' The foulest woman on earth has an unspoken respect for the man she cannot corrupt, that she never feels for her easy victim; the general looks longingly at the citadel he cannot take, while he despoils with a laugh that which has already fallen. No; a woman who is a woman, loves the man who is stainless; and the same word or act that diminishes her respect, diminishes her love. The attachment that is founded upon physical characteristics alone, deserves a coarser name than love. I admit that women often marry corrupt men—sometimes in preference to noble ones—but it is not love that causes them to do so; it is evil teaching. The doctrine of keeping up appearances is so faithfully taught to our youth, the eye is trained so much more than the heart, that many a young woman will abandon the lover whom her heart and judgment select, to espouse the one whose clothing and appearance best pleases her eye. Years of prison and torture remind her of her mistake."

"Well, most women are pleased when men stoop to them."

"Their vanity is pleased, of course. But servility in all cases diminishes respect for the one who stoops. A man should enter the matrimonial market just as stainless as a woman; then he should maintain the nobility and dignity that befits such a character. These conditions being answered to, he may rest assured that the affection he obtains will be for himself as he is, and not for the promises he may make for the future. The affection which he gives will be priceless because it is stainless."

"Well, there must be a good many women who do not



love their husbands, if your theory is true. Because a great many women do marry, who have nothing whatever to depend on, save promises for the future," said Erastus.

"It is true," she answered; "women are taught to hide their real feelings. Society says that they must marry, and, as most of them are raised, they are obliged to marry in order to be supported. But it does not always follow that they love the creatures they wed. They scorn the servile, and secretly hate the tyrants. But the woman who has wedded a noble, pure, and humane man, will be happy, and her joy will shine out in her face."

"And so," spoke up Hockman, "I suppose you'll take Mayfair here, and then joy will shine out in *your* face." There was derision in the tone and a mocking laughing as a finale. But Miss Royal was not much disconcerted; she colored a little, and then seeing that attempts at concealment were useless, she laughed aloud.

"Yes, that is just what I intend to do," she said. "It's all settled, and I have no guarantee for the future save the record of the past." And then Jake Mayfair attempted to chew the end of the poker, Erastus McGaggy blew his nose so loud that Mary McCain awoke with a start, and Will Hockman looked sadly down at his pants as if their airing had been a mistake.

"What's the matter?" wildly demanded Mary McCain, as she rubbed her eyes.

"Oh, nothing. We've just been holding a council of contention—that's all," said Erastus, who half enjoyed the situation—if it could not be him, he was glad it was not Hockman.

"Say, did you do the proposing?" asked Hockman, with a sneer, as he turned toward Miss Royal, "I don't think Mayfair could get up courage enough."

"No, I did not propose," she answered smilingly; "I've known Mr. Mayfair to do three very brave things; he has maintained a spotless integrity in the midst of riot and filth; he took a child out of the Gaston when it was a raging torrent, and he asked an exceedingly wild girl to be his wife."

"Eveline!" remonstrated Jake. But Eveline only laughed.

Conversation flagged. The weary party occasionally found subjects to discuss, but the arguments were always short. It was plain that the animated converse was over.



Presently the gray dawn stole in at the windows and dimmed the light of the lamp. Doors were heard opening and closing. The inmates of the house were astir. Miss Royal entered the parlor and extinguished the light that had burned all night beside the fair sleeper who was to awake no more on earth. The long watch was over. The day had arrived when the fool, having paid the full penalty for her folly, was to leave her home forever.

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## CHAPTER XX.

## CONCLUSION.

IF the reader's patience is not completely exhausted by the abundance of foolishness described in this small book, the author would now like to put forward a few wild ideas on her own account.

Careful statistics kept for many years in England prove that in that country, which is probably a fair average in matters of birth, there are one hundred and five male children born to every one hundred females. A few more males than females die in childhood, so that the numbers of the two sexes arriving at maturity are about equal. This fact would seem to indicate that nature meant to provide one of one sex for each one of the other. But if so, our civilization defeats nature of her purpose. Vice, intemperance, and war, kill so many males in their early manhood, that the number of adult females is largely in the ascendancy. Thus many women are cheated out of homes and husbands, and every woman is not, as nature prepared and intended her to be, a mother.

The policy of our nation tends mainly toward peace, still we support a public opinion and a code of laws which kill off our men so fast that many women go unmated and our homes are all too few. Many women are also swept into the whirlpool of destruction, and thousands of others rendered miserable beyond the power of words to portray.

We outwardly support the union of one man with one woman, but neither law nor public opinion enforce this. A



man may have a hundred wives, provided he confine his vows to one. If our laws provided no way save marriage for the enjoyment of love, the men who are now tramping, and begging their way, would be supporters of homes. If it be true that the love of a woman is necessary to the happiness of a man, why not turn the fact to the good and glory and happiness of the nation, instead of letting it sink the Republic into a cesspool of filth and shame?

The Republic does not depend upon mighty armies and huge guns for her protection—they can be had if need be—but the integrity of her citizens is her bulwark. This can only be developed in the home. The brothel is a hot-bed of idleness, weakness, insubordination, ignorance, intemperance, and discontent. Poverty, crime, anarchy, tyranny, disregard for law, and hate of progress, are born and fondled there. Are we too *weak* to put it down? Has its virus envenomed us all until we can coolly look upon its ravages and be silent? Is it not useless as well as criminal? Does not the law permit every man to enjoy the love of woman in honorable fashion?

Perhaps our citizens will say that the matter has assumed such proportions that it is uncontrollable. If it is so now, what will it be fifty years hence! Will it not control *us* and lead us to weakness, effeminacy, and national death? "Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction?" Better to risk the battle now, than to wait until fear of a growing evil has sapped our courage.

Let us look back and learn wisdom from our shadowed and blood-stained past. When our young Republic was organized, wise tongues said: "Let us regulate the slavery question. Let us rid ourselves of the pest now." But others said: "We are too weak; it will tear our nation asunder;" and so the matter rested. A year, at most a few years, of argument, would have sufficed to settle the matter then, for slavery had not yet become very profitable. But our fathers closed their eyes upon the future. They preferred to feed, pet, and conciliate the dragon in order to keep it peaceable. It lived. It flourished and grew until it poisoned the minds of thousands—millions—of our best, most warm-hearted, truest citizens, who rose in battle to defend their institution. Oh, just but awful God of progress! Thy will was done, thy children marched out of the house of bondage at last; but Oh, at what a fearful cost of blood and life and brotherly love!



Will our citizens *ever* forget the bitterness engendered then? Will they *ever* clasp hands over the slain dragon, and together bury its rotting carcass away from sight? Let them do so and quickly. There is work in the future for them to do. Let them forget the blood that has been shed in the past, and beware of that which may redden the future.

There is another dragon which we are telling ourselves we cannot strangle. It is growing. We are feeding it our daughters and our sons; it ravenously devours them and demands those whom we would hold back and shelter. Its venom is in our homes. There are a few heroic souls—Ah, reforms are so small and slender when they organize, so mighty and victorious when they disband—who are clamoring for the dragon's destruction. Let them enlist the noblest of the Republic's sons to lend their hands to strangle the monster. Let them not divide into two hostile ranks and fight each other over its slimy scales, but let them direct their blows at its murderous heart, and visit it with un pitying war until it is helpless and buried from sight, and its frightful name forgotten.

We will be responsible if our children shed each other's blood over this dragon. You laugh at the idea of bloodshed over such a matter? Think first. Wars have been waged over lighter questions. The few heroic souls who have decided that the monster shall die, will become a mighty host; their ranks will be recruited from the young men of the land, and vice will not sap their strength. They will be formidable. Let us beware, lest history repeat itself.

The little band of fellow beings we have met?

Mr. Will Hockman returned to the East and assured his friends that Colorado is the most over-rated place on earth. Its mountains are flat, its scenery tame; and its people but little removed from idiocy.

Jake and Eveline Mayfair are prospering wonderfully.

Mr. De Kalb is still principal of the school in Bannertown. The only particular incident we can mention concerning him is his rescue of a family of colored children from a burning house. His manly, true-hearted pupils constitute the best possible proof that his life is one of noble, heroic endeavor.

Hetty Ann Bales survived Gessia less than a year. Her husband mourned for her. He told his friends at the



saloon that although his wife was cranky and queer, still she always had a good warm supper ready for him when he came home at night, and he "would like to know where in the H—l them warm suppers was to come from now."

The Hattons continue to prosper. Frank told one of his cow-boy friends, who of course was also a brute, the story of Jennie Nelson. The cow-boy thought that a girl who sold her virtue, that she might spread blankets over her dying mother, might be worth inquiring after. He made her acquaintance and a marriage was the result. They are doing well.

Tom Batts and wife are much interested in the bringing-up of a son.

The Blakeslys still walk quietly along the road of life, doing such little kindnesses as their scant means admit of.

There is one man in the Boulder Creek neighborhood who never smiles. He carefully trains two solemn-looking boys, and spends all his leisure time teaching them and directing their thoughts. He never speaks to a woman save when doing so is unavoidable. His home, where Sam McCain rules, and where his wife, Cornelia, does the housework, has lost all charms for him. He lives only for his children. His name is John Solomon.

The snow still lies heavy and white on Bernalillo's crest. It still supplies food and drink and clothing to the dwellers in the valley below. And in the shadow of that lofty peak, other tragedies will be enacted and other lives be marred. Alas, for the creatures who give up a life-happiness in order to bow down to a tyrant custom!

THE END.























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